



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

**Department of Sociology
University of North Carolina**

Graduate Studies Program Handbook

The Graduate Studies Committee

Yong Cai, Director of Graduate Studies

Kelsie Taylor, Graduate Student Services Manager

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PREFACE

UNC Chapel Hill's Department of Sociology is proud of its exceptional graduate program. We are committed to providing a rigorous, enriching, and affirming training experience for our students. We recognize that institutions of higher education have long been less accessible and supportive of members of underrepresented and minoritized populations, and we therefore continue to work on addressing this through practices designed to build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community and program. We commit to provide a safe and stimulating learning and research environment for all students. Graduate students are invited and encouraged to get involved in our community building efforts, including graduate student recruiting, faculty hiring, curriculum planning, and more.

This document offers guidance and outlines key policies for students. For help or additional information, please consult the following resources:

1. The [UNC Graduate School Handbook](#) contains specific details on Graduate School requirements and procedures. You should always consult it *first* when you have a question about Graduate School requirements -- it is the final word!
2. Your Department of Sociology faculty advisor is the person you should turn to first for advice and assistance about academic matters. Please meet with your initial advisor early in the fall term as soon as you arrive on campus. After that, you should meet regularly with your advisor -- at least once a month. Your initial assigned first-year advisor is transitory. If you find another faculty member you would like to work with, please have your advisor's verbal agreement and notify the Graduate Student Services Manager.
3. Please contact the Graduate Student Services Manager if you have questions about administrative procedures.
4. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies if you are experiencing problems with the graduate program that cannot be resolved through your advisor or the Graduate Student Services Manager.
5. The department is committed to providing a safe, diverse, and equitable environment. Please familiarize yourself with the [University's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct](#). Individuals are encouraged to report incidents of prohibited conduct to the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), [the Office of the Dean of Students](#), or [the UNC Police](#). As an alternative, an individual can also seek confidential assistance that does not involve notice to the University. If the conduct you have experienced is sexual violence or other criminal activity, including interpersonal (relationship) violence or stalking, you are also encouraged to report the incident to local law enforcement. Visit safe.unc.edu for a comprehensive list of support and reporting options.
6. Please keep your own record of your progress through the program, including requirements you have met and letters to/from the Department and the Graduate School, in case a discrepancy arises in the files.

TYPICAL PROGRAM TIMELINE

Year	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer
1	<p>COURSEWORK 3 courses plus proseminar: Theory (SOC 700) Statistics (SOC 708) One additional course Proseminar (SOC 950, 1-credit)</p> <p>TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP</p>	<p>COURSEWORK 3 courses plus proseminar: Methods (SOC 707) Statistics (SOC 709) One additional course Proseminar (SOC 950, 1-credit)</p> <p>TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP</p> <p>Begin formulating Master's Thesis, select thesis advisor, discuss written summary of research question and data with advisor by end of semester</p>	<p>Work on Master's Thesis Proposal</p>
2	<p>COURSEWORK 2 or 3 courses</p> <p>MASTER'S THESIS PROPOSAL Defend by end of semester</p> <p>TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP</p>	<p>COURSEWORK 2 or 3 courses</p> <p>MASTER'S THESIS</p> <p>TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP</p> <p>Select Comprehensive Exams, begin preparations</p>	<p>Prepare for Comps</p>
3	<p>COURSEWORK Master's thesis hours (SOC 993)</p> <p>MASTER'S THESIS Defend by Oct. 1</p> <p>COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS</p> <p>TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP</p> <p>Prepare Dissertation Proposal Apply for dissertation fellowships</p>	<p>COURSEWORK Teaching course (SOC 980)</p> <p>COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS</p> <p>TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP</p> <p>Prepare Dissertation Proposal</p>	<p>Possibly teach Summer Session after 3rd year?</p> <p>Prepare Dissertation Proposal</p>
4	<p>DISSERTATION PROPOSAL</p> <p>TEACHING FELLOWSHIP or DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP</p>	<p>DISSERTATION PROPOSAL Defend by end of semester</p> <p>TEACHING FELLOWSHIP or DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP</p>	<p>Work on dissertation, prepare for job market</p>
5	<p>DISSERTATION WRITING</p> <p>TEACHING FELLOWSHIP or DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP</p>	<p>DISSERTATION WRITING</p> <p>TEACHING FELLOWSHIP or DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP</p>	<p>Complete dissertation, prepare for job market</p>
6	<p>Possible additional year if funding is available.</p>	<p>Possible additional year if funding is available.</p>	

Name:

PID:

Cohort Year:

MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS:

Area	Course	Credits	Date Completed (Semester/Year)
Theory (1 course)	SOCI 700	3	
Methods (4 courses)	SOCI 707	4	
	SOCI 708	4	
	SOCI 709	4	
		3	
Proseminar (2 courses)	SOCI 950	1	
	SOCI 950	1	
Content (4 courses)	SOCI xxx	3	
	SOCI xxx	3	
		3	
		3	
MA Thesis Hours	SOCI 993	3	

Area	Title	Date Completed (Month/Year)
MA Thesis Proposal Defense		
MA Thesis Final Defense		

****Note:** Students must register for SOCI 993 the semester they defend their MA Thesis Proposal/Final MA Thesis. If a student completes both defenses the same semester, they need only register for SOCI 993 once.

PH.D. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS:

Area	Course/Area	Credits	Date Completed (Semester/Year)
Teaching Seminar	SOCI 980	3	
Comp Exam #1	[Area]		
Comp Exam #2	[Area]		
Doctoral Research & Dissertation Hours	SOCI 994	3	
Doctoral Research & Dissertation Hours	SOCI 994	3	

Area	Title	Date Completed (Month/Year)
Dissertation Proposal Defense		
Dissertation Proposal Defense		

****Note:** Students must take at least 2 semesters (6 credits) of SOCI 994. Students must be enrolled in SOCI 994 to defend their Dissertation proposal and should remain enrolled in 994 through their dissertation defense.

In-State Residency Requirement (semester/year):
(Not applicable to International Students)

THE ADVISOR-ADVISEE RELATIONSHIP

The quality of graduate education depends on a productive and supportive advisor-advisee relationship. Building this relationship is an essential task for both faculty and students, along with research, teaching, and other duties, and it is the responsibility of both the advisor and the advisee to maintain good communication about this relationship.

Students have three advisors during their graduate career. These advisors may or may not be the same person:

- *Initial advisor.* This faculty member is assigned in the months before the start of your first year in the graduate program to help students get acclimated to the Department, assist with and approve course selections, and work with students as they begin planning for the Master's Thesis. Students may transition from their initial advisor to a Master's Thesis advisor when they settle on a direction for the thesis. Often, but not always, the initial advisor serves also as Master's Thesis advisor – if not, please have your new advisor's verbal agreement and notify the Graduate Student Services Manager.
- *Master's Thesis advisor.* Students select their Master's Thesis advisor by the end of the spring semester of their first year. This faculty member chairs the Master's Thesis committee, assists with and approves course selections, and advising students as they begin planning for comprehensive exams and finding a dissertation project.
- *Doctoral Dissertation advisor.* Students select their Doctoral Dissertation advisor within one semester of completing their Master's Thesis. This faculty member chairs the Doctoral Dissertation committee, works with students on their comprehensive exams and the dissertation, and works with students to prepare for life after graduation.

The Department expects advisors and advisees to meet at least once a month throughout the academic year. At the beginning of each semester, they meet to review the student's accomplishments, set goals for the upcoming semester, and schedule meetings to put on their calendars for the semester. The expectation of having regular meetings is the same for advisors and advisees who are on leave or away from campus for extended periods.

Students who have concerns about their advising relationship may wish to schedule a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Responsibilities of the advisor/advisee relationship include:

The Advisor . . .

1. Is responsive to advisee's needs.

- Responds to e-mails in a timely manner.
- Helps integrate the student into the department and the profession.
- Reads and comments on drafts of student's materials; provides feedback, positive and negative, of student's progress.

2. Assists in establishing a research agenda.

- Guides student's thinking toward research questions, provides examples of successful projects, works with student to develop feasible and timely plans for graduate work.
- Discusses advisor's research projects, provides opportunities for student involvement if possible.

3. Works with student to develop career goals.

- Assists in development of goals for academic progress, professional socialization, publication, grant-writing, and post-graduate career opportunities.

The Advisee. . .

1. Is pro-active in forging a sociological career.

- Responds to e-mails in a timely manner.
- Seeks network connections in the department and the profession.
- Hears assessments and asks questions about how these affect goals and progress.
- Seriously considers comments.

2. Solidifies research interests and goals.

- Actively pursues research interests, asks questions to learn about the management of a research agenda.
- Is aware of institutional deadlines and informs advisor of goals and progress towards them.
- Learns from advisor's research experiences.

3. Develops career goals.

- Actively sets and pursues goals in training, education, and professional life.

THE MASTER'S DEGREE

The UNC Department of Sociology offers a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree to students who are admitted to its doctoral program. The department does not admit students for a terminal M.A. degree. The requirements for the M.A. constitute the first phase of the requirements for the doctoral degree.

Some of the rules for a M.A. in Sociology are established by the Graduate School; others are departmental rules. Only a few of the Graduate School requirements are reproduced below. For a full listing of the Graduate School's rules, please read the *Graduate School Handbook* carefully. All rules are subject to revision by the Graduate School or the Department of Sociology.

Credit hours

The M.A. degree involves a minimum of 10 courses, including at least three and no more than six hours of Master's Thesis credit (SOCI 993), for a total of 36 credit hours. Students take three courses per semester in their first year, plus the first-year proseminar, and two or three courses per semester in their second year, with additional courses optional throughout their graduate career.

Methodology courses

Students take three methodology courses in their first two semesters. Each of these courses carries 4 credits:

SOCI 708	Statistics for Sociologists (Fall)
SOCI 707	Measurement and Data Collection (Spring)
SOCI 709	Linear Regression Models (Spring)

Students also take at least one specialized 3-credit methodology course in Sociology (numbered between 711 and 799, and SOCI 814).

Other methodology courses inside or outside of the Department may also meet this requirement – they will be considered by the Department's Graduate Studies Committee on a case-by-case basis. Please consult the Director of Graduate Studies in advance of the course if you would like it to be considered.

Theory course

Students take History of Social Thought (SOCI 700) in their first semester.

Proseminar

First-year students take the Department's Proseminar in Sociological Research for one credit hour each semester. The proseminar meets each week for an hour with different faculty members reporting on their current research and discussing topics such as departmental expectations and professionalization. The course is listed as SOCI 950, with a section number that may change each semester – please get the section number from the Graduate Student Services Manager.

Additional courses

Students take at least four other 3-credit courses for the M.A. It is especially worthwhile for students to take courses in subject areas they may want to teach in the future, and subject areas in which they may want to take comprehensive exams. Prior to each semester, students should consult with their advisor about their course selection and schedule.

Two of these four courses may be “flex” courses:

- Graduate courses taken outside of the UNC Department of Sociology that are directly related to the student’s areas of specialization, including transfer credits.
- Graduate-level independent study in the Department (one course maximum).

All “flex” courses taken during the graduate program need to be approved in advance by the student’s advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Course Bypass

Students who have taken comparable graduate methodology or theory courses before enrollment may apply to the Director of Graduate Studies in advance for a bypass, though the Department prefers that students join their cohort-mates in the required courses. Bypass applications should include the syllabus and the student’s written assignments. Faculty appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies will determine whether the student’s performance in the previous course should be considered comparable to the Department’s required course. Students who bypass required courses are required to take a comparable number of methods or theory courses in order to fulfill the requirement.

Transferring course credits from another institution

During their first year in the graduate program, students may request credit for up to two 3-credit graduate-level courses that they have taken at another institution before entering the Department’s graduate program. The Director of Graduate Studies, the student’s advisor, and the instructor of a comparable course at UNC will review the syllabus and the student’s written assignments to determine whether the student’s performance in the previous course(s) should be considered comparable to passing work in the Department’s graduate courses. If all agree that credit should be granted, the request will be submitted to the Graduate School for review and approval. The student may not count a similar course in the Department toward fulfillment of requirements. See also the Graduate School’s rules on [Transferring Course Credit](#).

International students

International students whose first language is not English are encouraged to make use of the resources on campus to improve their English-language abilities, including the Graduate School’s [the Preparing International Teaching Assistants Program](#) and [the English Language Support program](#) at UNC’s [Writing Center](#). The ability to communicate fluently in English is a requirement for teaching positions in the Sociology Department.

The Master’s Thesis: A definition

The Master’s Thesis is an original research project that is limited in scope. The Master’s Thesis demonstrates your ability to review pertinent literature and integrate it into a body of theory, design a feasible study, analyze data, and report the research in the form of a mainstream sociology journal article.

The Master’s Thesis must be completed within five years, according to Graduate School rules, but the Department of Sociology’s goal is for students to defend their Master’s Thesis by the fall of their third year (see the Program Timeline in this document). In order to stay in good academic standing with the department, students must defend the Master’s Thesis by the end of March of their third year.

Forming a Master’s Thesis committee

The Master’s Thesis is supervised and approved by a three-person committee of faculty members – the Master’s Thesis advisor and two other committee members. The Master’s Thesis advisor may be, but does not have to be, the same person as the student’s initial advisor. The Master’s Thesis advisor

and at least one other committee member must be faculty members of the Department of Sociology at UNC-Chapel Hill and full members of the UNC graduate faculty. The Graduate School must approve committee members who are not members of the graduate faculty.

Students should consult with their initial advisor and their Master's Thesis advisor about forming the Master's Thesis committee. The committee must be approved by the Master's Thesis advisor and the Department's Director of Graduate Studies.

Preparing a Master's Thesis proposal

The Master's Thesis proposal is a written document that is submitted to the Master's Thesis committee at least two weeks in advance of the Master's Thesis proposal defense. There is no set length for proposals – students consult with their Master's Thesis advisor on this and all other aspects of the proposal. Proposals generally include the following sections:

- A succinct statement of the main problem that the thesis will address (one page or less).
- An overview of the scholarly literature that has addressed this problem to date.
- An indication of the paper's contribution to the literature, such as specific hypotheses it will test or novel insights it will provide.
- A description of data sources.
- A discussion of methods of analysis.
- A timetable for completing each stage of the project.
- A bibliography of the scholarly literature relevant to the thesis.

Models of Master's Thesis proposals are available on [the Sociology Graduate Students site on Sakai](#). Students are invited to contribute their own successful proposals for other students to consult.

All Master's Thesis projects in sociology must submit plans for human subject protection to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in advance of the proposal defense. University regulations stipulate, "No research with human subjects shall take place at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill without the prior approval of an IRB." (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [Human Research Protection Program, Standard Operating Procedures](#), June 21, 2012, p. 13)

Master's Thesis proposal defense

The Master's Thesis proposal defense is held before the student proceeds with full-scale data collection and analysis. Its purpose is to assess the feasibility of the proposed research and give students the benefit of suggestions from committee members. The Proposal should be submitted to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the proposal defense. Summer defenses are discouraged. Students must be enrolled in SOCI 993 during the semester of proposal defense.

Graduate School rules require all Master's Thesis committee members to be in attendance, although teleconferencing or videoconferencing may be allowed with the approval of the Master's Thesis advisor. Students should contact the Graduate Student Services Manager as soon as they begin to consider dates and times for the defense, in order to check the availability of the "defense room" and reserve it. The Graduate Student Services Manager will provide the student with forms that need to be signed by the committee at the conclusion of the defense.

Master's Thesis credit hours

Students take at least three and no more than six credit hours of Master's Thesis credit (SOCI 993). Students may register for additional credit hours, but the hours will not be counted towards credit for the M.A. degree. Registration for these credit hours requires prior approval from the student's

advisor. Students must be enrolled in 993 in order to defend their proposal, and should remain enrolled in 993 through their thesis defense.

Master's Thesis final defense

When a student's Master's Thesis is ready, the advisor will indicate that it is time to schedule a final defense with the Master's Thesis committee. The Graduate School requires that students be registered during the semester of the defense and enrolled in SOCI 993. The thesis should be submitted to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the final defense, and the defense should be scheduled at least two weeks before the deadline for graduation, and preferably longer, so that there is sufficient time for revisions suggested by the committee. Summer defenses are discouraged.

Graduate School rules require all Master's Thesis committee members to be in attendance, although teleconferencing or videoconferencing may be allowed with the approval of the Master's Thesis advisor. Students should contact the Graduate Student Services Manager as soon as they begin to consider dates and times for the defense, in order to check the availability of the "defense room" and reserve it. The Graduate Student Services Manager will provide the student with forms that need to be signed by the committee at the conclusion of the defense.

The Master's Thesis committee judges by majority vote whether the Master's Thesis is acceptable as a piece of original research in the form of a mainstream sociology journal article. The committee may decide:

1. The Master's Thesis is acceptable in its current form.
2. The Master's Thesis requires minor revisions to be considered acceptable. The committee may ask to review the changes individually, or it may delegate this responsibility to the Master's Thesis advisor. The committee signs the approval form in anticipation that the changes will be made successfully, and the form is held by the Graduate Student Services Manager until the revisions are approved by the Master's Thesis advisor.
3. The Master's Thesis requires such substantial revisions that the committee prefers to meet for a second defense. Graduate School rules require that the committee wait at least three months before a second defense. The Graduate School does not allow a third defense.

When the Master's Thesis is approved, the committee recommends to the Director of Graduate Studies whether the student's performance demonstrates a reasonable promise of success in the doctoral program. This judgment is based on the quality of the Master's Thesis, the timeliness of the preparation of the thesis, and the student's ability to work autonomously. The Director of Graduate Studies typically accepts the committee's judgment. If the Director of Graduate Studies decides that the student does not have sufficient promise of success, the student receives a "terminal Master's degree" and is not permitted to continue in the doctoral program. The committee's decision may be appealed in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies within two weeks of the decision, and the Director of Graduate Studies' decision may be appealed in writing within two weeks to the Chair of the Department of Sociology.

When the Master's Thesis is approved by the committee, the student must submit a final copy to the Graduate Student Services Manager to be posted on the Department's Sakai site and for internal records.

In order to make adequate progress towards your PhD degree, students must defend their MA thesis by March 31st of their third year. Students who miss this deadline will be ineligible for departmental support, such as teaching assistantships or fellowships.

According to Graduate School rules, students who are given permission to proceed beyond the Master's Thesis must register for doctoral studies in the following regular semester (fall or spring).

Graduation deadlines

In preparation for the Master's Thesis defense, students should check the [Graduate Deadlines](#) established by the Graduate School. In order to receive the M.A. degree in the same semester as the defense, the Graduate School requires that students apply early in the semester. These deadlines may come before the Master's Thesis defense – students are encouraged to discuss the timing of the defense and graduation with their advisor.

Bypass of Master's Thesis

Students who have completed a Master's Thesis at another institution may apply for a bypass of the Department's Master's Thesis requirement if their advisor feels this is appropriate. The student submits their previous Master's Thesis to the Director of Graduate Studies, who appoints a three-person committee to evaluate it. If the committee decides that the thesis is of such a caliber that it would be approved as a Master's Thesis in our Department, then the bypass will be granted. Revisions are not permitted for the bypass – if the committee feels that revisions are necessary, the project should be handled through the usual proposal and defense procedures for Master's Theses in the Department.

GRADUATE MINOR IN SOCIOLOGY

Graduate students in other departments at UNC-Chapel Hill may earn a minor in sociology by taking five graduate-level sociology courses, including Sociological Theory (SOC 700) and Research Methods (SOC 707). These two required courses and at least one additional course must be taken in the UNC Department of Sociology. Up to two courses may be taken in the Sociology Departments at Duke or N.C. State. Students should choose their courses in consultation with their faculty "minor advisor" in the Sociology Department. The minor advisor sends a memo to the Director of Graduate Studies, certifying that the five courses represent an appropriate program for that student.

Sociology majors are given first preference as enrollees in all sociology graduate courses, and minor-ing in sociology does not guarantee that a student will have access to a particular class.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE AND PART-TIME STATUS

Students who are unable to make progress in the program for substantial periods of time – perhaps because of family responsibilities or illness – should request a leave of absence from the Graduate School, which pauses the Graduate School’s time to degree “clock.” The procedures for requesting a leave of absence and readmission to the program are available on the Graduate School’s [website](#). For procedural assistance, please see the Graduate Student Services Manager. Students should discuss these steps, like all aspects of their graduate career, with their advisor.

Doctoral degree graduate students who must be away from campus completing academic requirements can petition to be charged at the Part-Time Classroom Studies College of Arts & Sciences graduate tuition and fee rate, instead of requesting a leave of absence. This rate will require approval by the student’s primary advisor, Director of Graduate Studies, or Chair, as well as The Graduate School.

Students eligible for consideration for the Part-Time Classroom Studies College of Arts & Sciences graduate tuition and fee rate must meet all the following requirements:

- Enrolled in a doctoral graduate degree program in the College of Arts and Sciences
- Engaged in full-time academic work that must be conducted off campus as determined by the requirements of your academic program

Students must first register for their coursework through [ConnectCarolina](#) as usual. Once the students are registered, the Petition for Off-Campus Rate Adjustment form must be reviewed by the program, who will take the student’s progress to date, academic plan for the semester, and need for university resources, including faculty time, into consideration. Approved petitions must then be submitted to The Graduate School for review. If approved, the Cashier’s Office will bill students at the appropriate rate. For procedural assistance, please see the Graduate Student Services Manager.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

After completing the Master's degree requirements, the next stage in the doctoral program is the comprehensive examinations, also known as qualifying exams. While the Master's Thesis demonstrates a student's depth of knowledge in a relatively specialized research area, comprehensive exams evaluate students' preparation for research and teaching in a broad area of the discipline of sociology. Students need not be intimately familiar with all research in the subfield; rather, they should offer a cogent assessment that demonstrates understanding of its history, main works, debates, and current concerns. Students should expect to spend approximately four months preparing for each examination.

Exams are held during two periods, once in the fall semester (usually on the first and third Fridays in October) and once in the spring semester (usually on the second and fourth Fridays in March, the Friday before and Friday after Spring Break). Students sign up for the fall comprehensive exams at the end of the spring semester and sign up for spring exams in the middle of the fall semesters. Students must pass comprehensive exams in two fields before they can submit their Doctoral Dissertation proposal. The Graduate School requires that students be registered during the semester of each comprehensive exam.

The list of exams offered each year is available from the Graduate Student Services Manager. This list also includes the faculty committee members for each exam.

Exams are open-book, open-note exams with six broad questions about theories, concepts, approaches, debates, and major authors in a given area. Students are asked to write on four of the six questions. Students are not permitted to receive assistance during the examination.

Scheduled exams become available on Sakai at 8:00 a.m. and must be returned via Sakai by 5:00 p.m. Late exams will not be accepted. Exams must be typed, not handwritten. Students who have special considerations, may request up to two hours extra time by writing to the Director of Graduate Studies when signing up for the exam. In order to receive disability accommodations, students must register with ARS (ars.unc.edu) and notify the Graduate Student Service Coordinator at least two weeks before the scheduled exam.

Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of a subfield in their answers. Answers must be factually correct, but need not rise to the level of writing expected of theses or course papers. A fully formatted reference list is not necessary, although the exam committee will appreciate enough bibliographic detail to understand the essays' references to published work.

Preparation for the exam

At least three months before the exam, students should submit a reading list of the top 100 works in the field for the approval of the exam committee, which will use this list as the basis for exam questions. This reading list should be based on past reading lists, which are available on the Graduate Student Sakai site, and should be updated to include the latest published work in the area, as well as a pruning of work that has become less relevant. The reading list should be organized around major themes or literatures within the exam area. It should also include a list of approximately five major journals in the exam area; students are expected to be familiar with the last five years' worth of articles in these journals. After the exam committee has an opportunity to request and approve revisions, the updated reading lists must be submitted to the Graduate Student Services Manager to be posted

on the Department's Sakai site. If several students are taking the same exam during the same semester, they may collaborate on this task.

At least three months prior to the exam, students contact the faculty exam committee members to discuss preparations, including a review of graduate courses taken by the student and offered by the faculty in the exam area and the student's interests in research and teaching in the exam area. Students are encouraged to collaborate while preparing for comprehensive exams and to write practice essays using old exams, which are available on the Department's Sakai site. However, the written examinations themselves must be the work of an individual.

Evaluation of the exam

Comprehensive exams are evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate broad competency in the chosen subfield. A passing grade indicates confidence in the student's competency. Faculty exam committees decide the standards and procedures they will use to make this determination, including procedures for instances when committee members are not unanimous. For each student, the committee makes a determination of Fail, Pass, or (in rare circumstances of performance far superior to the norm) Pass with Distinction. Revisions are not permitted. However, for exams that are marginal, the committee may schedule an oral examination. The committee may also ask the Director of Graduate Studies to appoint an outside reader to review the exam.

The committee's decision, including feedback to students' answers, is due within two weeks of the exam. When necessary, oral examination or evaluation by an outside reader should proceed in a timely manner and the deadline for exam evaluation is extended by two weeks.

When a failing grade is issued, the committee should provide specific feedback detailing the shortcomings of the examination. Students who fail are allowed one chance to re-take the exam or choose a different exam in the following semester. If the student changes exam area, the new exam counts as the second try. Two failed exams prevent a student from continuing in the doctoral program.

New exam areas

The Director of Graduate Studies will approve a new comprehensive exam area at the request of either faculty or students, when three faculty members are willing to form a new ongoing committee in an area of breadth similar to the current exams, on the basis of their expertise. The Department has a policy not to offer exams that are tailored for particular students.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All student work at UNC is covered by [the Honor Code](#), which requires academic honesty, personal integrity, and responsible citizenship. Improper or insufficient citation or paraphrasing of other people's words and ideas is considered a violation of the Honor Code. All work in the Department of Sociology is also bound by the American Sociological Association's [Code of Ethics](#).

Students who commit academic dishonesty in either their coursework, comprehensive exams, proposals, or theses will be ineligible for departmental funding and asked to leave the program.

THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

The Doctoral Dissertation is the culmination of the Department's graduate training. It is an extensive, professional, original research project that demonstrates independent thought in the formulation and treatment of an important sociological problem.

Teaching course

Students take the Department's Teaching Sociology Seminar (SOCI 980) by the spring of their third year. This course reflects the Department's commitment to quality teaching and is required before students serve as a Teaching Fellow and teach their own courses. This three-hour course covers educational psychology, the philosophy of teaching, a wide variety of teaching methods, and course design, based on an active learning model. Graduate students take the lead in organizing class meetings, serve as guest teachers in Department courses, lead group discussions, design and grade examinations, create their own class exercises, learn how to choose textbooks (if they decide to use them), and learn how to deal with problem students, among other pedagogical issues.

Forming a Doctoral Dissertation committee

Planning for the Doctoral Dissertation should begin right after defending the Master's Thesis, while studying for the comprehensive exams, in consultation with the student's dissertation advisor and potential dissertation committee members. The committee is composed of five faculty members. The chair and at least two other committee members must be faculty members of the Department of Sociology at UNC-Chapel Hill and full members of the UNC graduate faculty. The Graduate School must approve committee members who are not members of the graduate faculty.

Doctoral Dissertation proposal defense

The Doctoral Dissertation proposal defense is scheduled as soon as possible after passing the comprehensive exams -- generally in the same semester or the following one. The purpose of the defense is to assess the feasibility of the proposed research and to give students the benefit of suggestions from dissertation committee members. The proposal is submitted to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the defense. The Graduate School requires that students be registered during the semester of the proposal defense. Summer defenses are discouraged.

Graduate School rules require all Doctoral Dissertation committee members to be in attendance, although teleconferencing or videoconferencing may be allowed with the approval of the Doctoral Dissertation advisor. Students should contact the Graduate Student Services Manager as soon as they begin to consider dates and times for the defense, in order to check the availability of the "defense room" and reserve it. The Graduate Student Services Manager will provide the student with forms that need to be signed by the committee at the conclusion of the defense.

Proposals generally include the following sections:

- A succinct statement of the main problems that the dissertation will address.
- An overview of the scholarly literatures that have addressed these problems to date.
- An indication of the paper's contribution to these literatures, such as specific hypotheses it will test or novel insights it will provide.
- A description of data sources, including preliminary findings or pre-tests.
- A discussion of methods of analysis.
- A timetable for completing each stage of the project.
- A bibliography of the scholarly literatures relevant to the dissertation.

Models of dissertation proposals are available on the Department Sakai site. Students are invited to contribute their own successful proposals for other students to consult.

All Doctoral Dissertation projects in sociology must submit plans for human subject protection to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in advance of the proposal defense. University regulations stipulate, "No research with human subjects shall take place at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill without the prior approval of an IRB." (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [Human Research Protection Program, Standard Operating Procedures](#), June 21, 2012, p. 13)

In order to make adequate progress towards your PhD degree, students must defend their dissertation proposal by March 31st of their fifth year. Students who miss this deadline will be ineligible for departmental support, such as teaching fellowships.

Doctoral Dissertation formats

Doctoral Dissertations in the Department of Sociology may take two forms: book-format and article-format. The format of the dissertation is approved at the proposal defense.

Book-format dissertations generally involve five or six interrelated chapters, each of which makes a significant contribution to the overall argument.

Article-format dissertations are comprised of at least three chapters that are suitable for publication in a refereed professional journal, plus introduction and concluding chapters that describe the unifying themes in the chapters. All dissertation chapters must be sole-authored work.

Doctoral Dissertation credit hours

Students take at least two semesters (six credit hours) of Doctoral Dissertation credit (SOCI 994). Registration for these credit hours requires prior approval from the student's advisor. Students must be enrolled in 994 in order to defend their proposal, and should remain enrolled in 994 through their dissertation defense.

Doctoral Dissertation final defense

When a student's Doctoral Dissertation is ready, the advisor will indicate that it is time to schedule a final defense with the Doctoral Dissertation committee. The Graduate School requires that students be registered during the semester of the defense. The dissertation must be submitted to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the final defense. Summer defenses are discouraged.

Committee members should be consulted as the dissertation proceeds, so that they can approve changes to the research plan and know when to expect the final defense. The dissertation should be submitted to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the defense, and the defense should be scheduled at least two weeks before the deadline for graduation, and preferably longer, so that there is sufficient time for revisions suggested by the committee.

Graduate School rules require all committee members to be in attendance, although teleconferencing or videoconferencing may be allowed with the approval of the Doctoral Dissertation advisor. Students should contact the Graduate Student Services Manager as soon as they begin to consider dates and times for the defense, in order to check the availability of the "defense room" and reserve it. The Graduate Student Services Manager will provide the student with forms that need to be signed by the committee at the conclusion of the defense.

The Doctoral Dissertation committee judges by majority vote whether the Doctoral Dissertation is acceptable as an original contribution to knowledge. The committee may decide:

1. The Doctoral Dissertation is acceptable in its current form.
2. The Doctoral Dissertation requires minor revisions to be considered acceptable. The committee may ask to review the changes individually, or it may delegate this responsibility to the Doctoral Dissertation advisor. The committee signs the approval form in anticipation that the changes will be made successfully, and the form is held by the Graduate Student Services Manager until the revisions are approved by the Doctoral Dissertation advisor.
3. The Doctoral Dissertation requires such substantial revisions that the committee prefers to meet for a second defense. Graduate School rules require that the committee wait at least three months before a second defense. The Graduate School does not allow a third defense.

Graduation deadlines

In preparation for the Doctoral Dissertation defense, students should check the [Graduation Deadlines](#) established by the Graduate School. In order to receive the Ph.D. degree in the same semester as the defense, the Graduate School requires that students apply early in the semester. These deadlines may come before the final defense – students are encouraged to discuss the timing of the defense and graduation with their advisor.

Doctoral degrees are awarded at the end of the spring, summer, and fall semesters, but commencement exercises are held only in May.

Time limit

The Graduate School requires that students complete both the Master's and doctoral degrees within eight years from the date of first registration in the Department.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Stipends

The Department provides financial support for all incoming students for 10 semesters, not including summer sessions, contingent on satisfactory performance of their responsibilities. Among other responsibilities, satisfactory performance includes defending the Master's Thesis by March 31st of the third year and defending the Doctoral Dissertation proposal by March 31st of the fifth year, in order to maintain departmental support. The Department is sometimes able to continue this assistance beyond 10 semesters, depending on departmental needs, the availability of financial resources, and the student's performance in the program.

The primary forms of financial support available to students are teaching assistantships and teaching fellowships, which are assigned each semester by the Associate Chair, and research assistantships, which are filled by individual faculty members based on the scope and schedule of their research grants.

A less common form of financial support involves fellowships and part-time administrative positions that the Department is occasionally able to offer from special sources, either as a replacement or a supplement for the usual forms of support. These opportunities will be announced via the Graduate Student Services Manager as they become available.

Teaching assistantships

Teaching assistant (TA) positions are provided to graduate students in their first three years of the program, contingent on satisfactory performance of their responsibilities. TA's typical workload is 10-15 hours per week. They help instructors with grading, preparation of exams, lecturing, and other teaching-related tasks assigned by the course instructor. They may also be assigned as discussion leaders, with responsibility for teaching weekly discussion groups. Teaching assistants are not permitted to tutor students in their course, except with the permission of the instructor.

Teaching assistants meet with their supervising instructor at the beginning of the semester to specify the expectations for TA work, go over the syllabus, identify the dates that assignments are due, and set a schedule for regular meetings between the TA and the instructor throughout the semester, including meetings at the middle and the end of the semester to review the TA's performance and make sure that the workload is not exceeding Department guidelines.

Teaching fellowships

Teaching fellow (TF) positions are provided to graduate students after they have completed the Department's seminar on teaching sociology (SOCI 980), contingent on satisfactory performance of their responsibilities. Teaching fellows teach their own undergraduate courses. Teaching fellows may have graduate students from other departments in their course, but not graduate students from the Sociology Department. Teaching fellows are not permitted to tutor students in their course. (Graduate students who wish to serve as a TA rather than a TF after their first three years in the program may apply to the Associate Chair, with an explanation of their circumstances and a supporting letter from their advisor; these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.)

Each course in the Department is assigned a faculty advisor – for a list of course advisors, please contact the Graduate Student Services Manager. Teaching fellows submit their syllabus to the faculty advisor for approval prior to the start of the semester. Teaching fellows should also feel free to

contact faculty advisors to discuss their course and invite them to sit in on their class and provide feedback on their teaching, if they wish.

Research assistantships

Research assistants (RAs) typically work 10-15 hours per week helping professors with research-related tasks such as bibliographic investigation, data gathering, and data processing. Faculty members are responsible for selecting research assistants for their projects.

Summer funding for the first year

The Department provides summer stipends for all incoming students following the first year except for those already have fellowships or other summer support. Students are expected to use the first summer to develop research projects, especially the MA thesis project. To receive summer stipends, students submit a brief plan to the Graduate Student Services Manager by April 30th of their first year for the research they will be doing in the summer and that has been approved/supported by their adviser.

Parental leave

The department works with and strongly supports the Graduate School's [parental leave policy](#). The Graduate School provides up to six (6) weeks of paid parental leave for eligible students, and requires application for leave to be submitted at least eight (8) weeks prior to anticipated childbirth or adoption. Students are encouraged to share their plan with their advisor and the Graduate Student Services Manager as early as it is appropriate. The Graduate Student Services Manager will provide assistance in checking eligibility, gathering signatures and coordinating with relevant parties in the department for managing expectations and responsibilities before and following the leave period.

Other sources of funding

The Department encourages graduate students to apply for University and external fellowships and grants. Semesters in which a student receives funding from a research assistant position or from a fellowship do not count against the 10 semesters of departmental funding.

The Graduate School awards [fellowships and grants](#) for dissertation and summer research, tuition support, and travel assistance. For awards that require departmental nomination/ranking, the department sets internal deadlines at two weeks before [the Graduate School ones](#). The [Graduate Funding Information Center](#) (GFIC) distributes funding information and assists students to find funding and collaborative opportunities. In addition, the Department maintains a list of funding opportunities for students and organizes discussion panel on how to apply for fundings outside of the department.

Various entities on campus provide emergency support, including financial assistance. The Graduate School's [Resilience & Resources](#) page is a good starting point. The Graduate Student Services Manager or the Director of Graduate Studies can help connect students to resources available on campus.

Summer teaching and on-line teaching

A limited number of courses are available for graduate student instructors through the Summer School and the Friday Center for Continuing Education. Students who have completed the Department's seminar on teaching sociology (SOCI 980) are eligible to teach these courses. These positions do not count against the 10 semesters of departmental funding.

Holding multiple positions at once

Students are discouraged from holding more than one position at a time, because the extra work can interfere with their performance in the graduate program. Under exceptional circumstances, however, students may request permission from the Director of Graduate Studies to work “over-time.” The Director of Graduate Studies will consult with the student’s advisor and the Associate Chair in considering the request.

Procedure to request a teaching position

To request a teaching position, including summer courses and on-line courses, students submit a form distributed by the Administrative Assistant, normally two semesters before the teaching semester. Incoming students submit this form in the spring before their arrival. The form asks students to identify the courses they are most interested and qualified to teach. The Associate Chair of the Department takes this information into account in assigning teaching assistants and teaching fellows but must sometimes assign students to other courses in order to meet departmental instructional needs. Turning in teaching request forms on time is critical to ensure a teaching position will be assigned.

Procedure to decline a research or teaching position

Students who obtain fellowships or other sources of funding may wish to decline a research or teaching position. To decline or resign a research assistantship, students should give their supervisor as much advance notice as possible. To decline a teaching assistantship, students should notify the Associate Chair of the Department at least three months prior to the start of the semester so that a replacement can be found.

Students requesting a teaching fellowship should let the Associate Chair know when they apply for a fellowship or other funding that might cause them to pull out of a course. To decline a teaching fellowship, the best time to notify the Associate Chair is before the student’s course appears on the Registrar’s website, so that the Department does not have to list the course as “Canceled.” The next best time is before registration opens, so that students in the class do not have to find a replacement course. The final opportunity to cancel a class is before the class enrolls 10 students, the College’s minimum for an undergraduate course. Once a course reaches the minimum enrollment, the Department and the teaching fellow are committed to offering the course. In exceptional cases, a student may be able to work with the Associate Chair to find a substitute teaching fellow who is willing to take on the position and is qualified to do so, according to Department guidelines. Graduate students who withdraw from a teaching fellowship without a substitute approved by the Associate Chair are moved to the bottom of the Department’s priority list for teaching positions during the subsequent two semesters.

Evaluation of teaching and research positions

Research and teaching assistants are evaluated by their supervisors in the middle and at the end of each semester. This evaluation is normally informal and should be conveyed to the student in the mid-semester and end-of-semester meetings. Teaching fellows are evaluated by their students through the College’s end-of-semester teaching evaluations, which are forwarded automatically to the Department.

If problems arise with a student’s performance in a research or teaching position, the faculty supervisor may address the issue directly with the student. In addition, the Director of Graduate Studies may be asked to speak with the students and faculty involved. In rare cases of a serious problem, the Director of Graduate Studies may require a graduate student to work for a semester on a

“probationary” basis to improve their performance. In even rarer cases, a graduate student may be barred from future research or teaching positions in the Department.

If problems arise with TA or RA workloads or schedule conflicts, the student may raise the issue directly with the faculty supervisor. In addition, the Director of Graduate Studies may be asked to speak with the students and faculty involved.

Tuition

The Department pays the University tuition for graduate students who are serving as teaching assistants or teaching fellows, up to the 10-semester limit set by the Graduate School. The Department also pays the tuition for graduate students serving as research assistants for faculty within the Sociology Department, although faculty members are encouraged to include tuition costs in their grant budgets. Tuition payments for external fellowships and grants depend on the specifications of the granting agency – students should read the agency’s guidelines carefully when they apply to see whether tuition is covered, and if there are limits to the coverage. When possible, the Department will pay the remaining portion of students’ tuition when they receive awards from prominent national funding sources that do not cover the full cost of tuition.

North Carolina residency

To remain eligible for tuition remission, students must apply for North Carolina residency before the start of their second year in the program, and re-apply each semester that their application is not approved. In-state residency saves the Department tens of thousands of dollars each semester and allows the program to fund additional graduate student positions.

Students who do not apply for in-state residency will be responsible for the out-of-state portion of their tuition. This requirement does not apply to international students, who are not eligible for in-state residency under North Carolina law. For further information on residency requirements and procedures, please consult the Graduate School “[North Carolina Residency](#)” webpage.

Conference travel funding

Students in good academic standing are eligible to receive up to \$1,000 per fiscal year from the Department for travel to the annual conferences of scholarly organizations such as the American Sociological Association, the Population Association of America, and the Southern Sociological Society. To receive these funds, the student must participate in the conference program, for example as a panelist, discussant, roundtable member, or poster session exhibitor, or be on the job market and meeting with prospective employers at the conference. This funding is not available to students on leave or who have received an extension in their time to degree. Funding is non-transferable between fiscal years.

Funding approval is automatic for students participating in the annual meetings of the ASA, PAA, or SSS. For other conferences, students should provide a page with details on the conference, the student’s role and rationale for participation. The application should be signed by the student and the student’s advisor, and be submitted to the Graduate Student Services Manager at least two weeks before the conference.

This funding is provided to students as reimbursements. Students should submit their reimbursement request within two weeks of the conference. Details on what sorts of expenditures are eligible for reimbursement and procedures for requesting reimbursement, please speak with the Graduate Student Services Manager and/or the Accounting Technician.

Research and skill development funding

Students may apply for up to \$1,000 per fiscal year from the Department for projects that contribute toward their professional development or serve as a pilot project for a subsequent grant application. Applications may be submitted to the Department Chair at any time during the year. Consideration of applications will continue until the year's funding is exhausted. A graduate student who receives funding can apply a second time while still in the graduate program. These funds may not be used for travel to conferences.

The application consists of a proposal of no more than three pages, including a brief budget, plus a message of support from the student's advisor. In case when students apply for funding for the second time, the application should provide details on what they accomplished with their prior funding, in addition to the information listed above.

Three types of proposals will be considered:

- *Skill development proposals* should explain why the training is important for professional development and the student's research plans, the cost of the training, whether there are other possible funding sources for this training, or whether there are opportunities for similar training at a lower cost. Should skill development funding be awarded, documentation of attending the professional development training must be submitted to the Accounting Technician within one week of attendance.
- *Pilot project proposals* should explain the importance of the work, how this pilot project might contribute to a grant application, the likelihood of funding for the grant application, including possible funding sources, and whether there are other possible funding sources for the pilot project. The Department favors proposals that show evidence of a search for outside support and a consideration of targets to which a grant application could be sent. Should pilot project funding be awarded, consult with Business Officer and/or Accounting Technician regarding expected expenses and required documentation submission.
- *Open access publishing support proposals* should explain how an open access publication contributes to the student's professional development. Proposal should also explain whether there are other possible funding sources to cover the cost of publication, or whether there are opportunities for publishing the paper at a lower cost. Should open access publishing support funding be awarded, consult with Business Officer and/or Accounting Technician regarding required documentation submission.