

GRADUATE HANDBOOK 2023–2024

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Department of Sociology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

OVERVIEW	1
COURSE REQUIREMENTS	2
QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS & QUALIFYING PAPER	4
THE DISSERTATION	8
EVALUATION OF GOOD STANDING & PROGRESS	14
EXPECTED TIMELINE	16
LEAVES OF ABSENCE	18
FUNDING	19
GRADUATE INSTRUCTORS	20

MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	22
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DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

OVERVIEW

The graduate program has two objectives: to give students a command of a basic core of sociological knowledge and analytical skills, and to provide opportunities to extend this knowledge through original scholarship. Professional competence in theory and research methods is coupled with in-depth knowledge in areas of specialization.

At the beginning of their time in the program, all students are assigned a first-year advisor from among the regular faculty. While some of these relationships may become permanent, it is anticipated that many students will switch to a new advisor after their first year. By the end of their first year in residence, students are encouraged to choose a more permanent advisor and begin planning for their qualifying paper and examinations. The advisor typically, but not always, serves as the Director of Research. Subsequent course and research work is done in close consultation with the student's advisor and examination and dissertation committees. A student's advisor must have a material appointment (i.e., greater than 25% time) in the Department of Sociology. Students who fail to secure a permanent advisor (and Director of Research, if these roles are played by different people) by the end of their third year will be placed on probation at the beginning of their fourth. Please notify the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) when changing advisor.

After completing two qualifying examinations and one qualifying paper, students prepare a proposal for original dissertation research. The defense of this proposal is the **preliminary examination** for admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Completing and successfully defending the dissertation are the final requirements for the doctoral degree.

Doctoral degrees require successful completion of a minimum of **96 semester hours of graduate credit**, as well as successful completion of the preliminary and final examinations. Doctoral degree candidates, regardless of transfer credits or a master's degree completed elsewhere, must complete at least 64 hours of residence credit out of the total of 96 hours required for the doctoral degree. Thesis hours count toward residence credit.

The following sections first describe the course requirements, evaluation and examination procedures, dissertation committee, and dissertation requirements for a Ph.D. in Sociology. Subsequent sections discuss the requirements for a Master's degree in Sociology and describe the Department's criteria for assigning assistantships.

Graduate students must also become familiar with the requirements of the Graduate College as set forth in the most recent version of *The Graduate College Handbook*.¹

Foreign nationals who are in the United States on a student visa need to ensure they are in compliance with their visa regulations. Please contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) for more information.²

Last but not least, graduate students should also note that their conduct is governed by the University's *Student Code*.³ Rules concerning the academic integrity, such as plagiarism, are described in Part 4, §1-402 of the *Student Code* and in the LAS guidelines on academic integrity.⁴

¹<https://grad.illinois.edu/sites/grad.illinois.edu/files/pdfs/handbook.pdf>

²<https://iss.illinois.edu>

³<https://studentcode.illinois.edu>

⁴<https://www.las.illinois.edu/students/integrity/>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Specific Course Requirements

Required Courses

- SOC 510: Professionalization Seminar
This should be taken in the fall of the first year, 2 credits, pass/fail grading.
- SOC 510: Professionalization Seminar (Teaching Practicum)
This should be taken in the spring of the first year, 2 credits, pass/fail grading.
- SOC 500: Classical Sociological Theory
- SOC 501: Contemporary Sociological Theory
- SOC 583: Qualitative Research Methods
- SOC 586: Advanced Social Statistics
If students have not already taken an upper-level undergraduate statistics course, they should take SOC 485, the prerequisite for SOC 586, during their first semester in residence.

Additional Required Courses

- One advanced methods course from the following: SOC 571, SOC 580, SOC 581, SOC 587
Advanced methods courses offered under the rubric SOC 596 may be approved to fulfill the second methods requirement upon showing that the course requires the completion of a research project.
- An additional five substantive courses at the 500 level.
The department's preference is for a maximum of two of these courses to come from outside of the department. Students seeking to substitute sociology courses with those offered in another department must submit their request and receive approval from the DGS prior to taking the course. Please see the next page for more information about course substitutions.

Optional Courses

- SOC 590: Individual Topics in Sociology
Although we encourage students to enroll in graduate seminars offered across campus, we recognize that sometimes there are benefits to undertaking an independent study. Students must seek approval from the DGS in advance for SOC 590 to count towards one of the requirements listed above. The request should include a tentative reading list and rationale for the course.
- SOC 597: Readings in Sociology
To be taken while preparing for qualifying examinations or the qualifying paper.
- SOC 598: Thesis Proposal
To be taken while preparing one's dissertation proposal.
- SOC 599: Dissertation Research
Students should complete 3-24 credits of SOC 599 while working on their dissertations.

Substituting Required Courses

Courses Completed at Another Institution

Students who have completed coursework at another institution that they believe is equivalent to a required course in the doctoral program may request that the department allow them to **substitute up to two required courses** with other substantive 500-level sociology courses.

To request the substitution of a required course, students should send an email to the DGS that contains the following information:

- Which required course the student would like to have substituted and a short description of the course taken previously that student believes is equivalent. The message should specify where and when the course was taken, as well as who the instructor was.
- Evidence of the requirements of the course that was taken, such as a syllabus, exams, reading list, homework problems, course catalog descriptions, and so on.
- Evidence of the student's performance in the course, such as answers to exam questions or homework problems, papers written, grades, evaluations, and so on.

In consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee, the DGS will make a decision and communicate it in writing to the student and to the student's advisor. Substitutions should be requested as soon as possible. In order of preference, the best time to request a substitution is before registering for one's first semester, during the first semester, or in the semester before the course in question is offered and usually taken.

Courses Offered by Another Department at Illinois

Students may request that 500-level courses offered by other departments at Illinois be allowed to substitute for the required courses listed on the previous page; i.e., an advanced methods and/or substantive 500-level courses. The department's strong preference, however, is for only two of these courses to come from outside of the department. Students may not petition to have 400-level courses fulfill the five 500-level substantive courses requirement.

To request the substitution of a required course, students must send an email to the DGS that contains the following information:

- The syllabus for the outside course.
- A paragraph that describes the course and explains why it is an appropriate substitute for a sociology course.

In consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee, the DGS will make a decision and communicate it in writing to the student and to the student's advisor.

QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS & QUALIFYING PAPER

Qualifying Examinations

Graduate students take two qualifying exams. Except for in exceptional circumstances, the exams should be taken in order; i.e., the general exam should be taken first and the subfield exam should be taken second. The exams are a means for students to gain mastery of recognized subfields within sociology. Students are expected to demonstrate that they understand major themes, questions, and debates in the sociological literature. The exams will provide a foundation for future research and teaching and may inform students' development of their qualifying papers and dissertations. However, the exams are not intended as a substitute for detailed literature reviews used to justify addressing particular research question(s) in an original research project.

Topics

Students will choose two exam topics from lists of approved topics. These topics will be subfields within sociology that are often the focus of sociology courses.

The **first exam** must be on a general topic. The approved general topics are as follows:

- Theory
- Methods
- Social Inequality and Stratification
- Global and Transnational Sociology

The **second exam** should be limited to a broad speciality or theoretical literature that is typically understood as a subfield of sociology. The list of possible exam topics is not static but rather will evolve over time as the composition of department faculty changes. At this time, the department is able to offer exams on the following topics:

- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender and Sexuality
- Social Organization
- Economic Sociology
- Urban Sociology
- Political Sociology / Social Movements
- Sociology of Culture
- Environmental Sociology
- Population and Health
- Criminology / Law and Society

Administration

Students will notify the Graduate support staff of their chosen exam topics by the dates shown in the table below. The Department Head will assemble a committee of three faculty members with expertise in the area. One committee will be responsible for preparing the reading list and writing the exam on a given topic for all of the students taking the exam on that topic. The composition of each student's exam committees is therefore likely to change from the first to the second exam. The Graduate support staff will administer the exam to students by distributing and collecting exams via email. Qualifying examinations are double-blind; i.e., students will not know which faculty members on the exam committee and committee members will not know who is taking the exam.

The exam questions will be based on materials appearing in required reading lists for each of the exam topics. These reading lists will be provided to students by their committee members. (Students will **not** be responsible for creating their own reading lists. Students may, however, supplement the reading lists with scholarly materials of their own choosing.) Students are expected to read and master the reading list prior to taking an exam.

Students will have two weeks to complete an exam. Exams will consist of six questions presented in three pairs. Students will answer one question from each pair in an essay format. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8–10 pages long (i.e., 2,000–2,500 words). Students will need to cite their work and include a bibliography. Student should cite their sources using ASA style. One comprehensive bibliography for all three questions will be sufficient.

Students may complete exams in the location(s) of their choice and consult materials from the reading list or other scholarly sources during the exam period. Students should cite relevant literature in their exam essays as practiced in scholarly publications. The exam essays will be evaluated by the students' committees. The committees will have two weeks to grade the exams.

Exams will be given grades of **high pass** (distinction), **pass**, or **fail**. The Graduate support staff will send students their grades via email. If a student fails an exam they will have one additional chance to retake the exam. These make-up exams will consist of new questions, but will be based off the same reading list as the original exam. If a student fails an exam a second time they will be dismissed from the graduate program.

All old examination questions and reading lists will be archived and made publicly available to future students on the department's website. The Graduate support staff will be responsible for archiving the exams and reading lists.

Timing

Exams will be offered twice each year: in August shortly before the beginning of the academic year and in January shortly before the beginning of the spring semester. Students may take the exams in any term they prefer, but both exams must be completed and passed by the end of the student's third year. The schedule of key tasks for Fall and Spring examinations is below.

	Fall Examinations	Spring Examinations
Students notify Graduate support staff of examination topic	April 1	September 1
Graduate support staff notifies Department Head of intended examinations	April 8	September 8
Department Head appoints examination committees and invites them to prepare reading lists and exams	May 1	October 1
Examination committees provide reading lists to students	June 1	November 1
Examination committees submit examination questions to the Graduate support staff	July 15	December 15
Graduate support staff Distributes exams to students	August 1*	January 1*
Students return their examinations to the Graduate support staff	August 15*	January 15*
Examination grades are shared with the students, their advisors, and the DGS	August 30*	January 30*

*These dates are approximate and will change from one year to the next. Reading lists, exams, and exam results will typically be distributed on the Monday closest to these dates.

If a student encounters an extraordinary situation that prevents them from completing an exam as required, such as a death in the family or medical emergency, then the student may petition the Graduate Studies Committee to extend, delay, or retake the exam without penalty. The Graduate Studies Committee must have received such a petition no later than the date the exam was scheduled to be completed. In turn, the Graduate Studies Committee must respond to the student with a plan to make-up the exam within four weeks of receiving the petition. If a student does not complete an exam when scheduled, nor submit a petition for deferral, then the student will be viewed as having failed the exam.

As noted above, students who fail a qualifying exam will one additional chance to retake and pass the exam during a subsequent regularly scheduled exam period. Both qualifying exams must be completed and passed by the end of the student's third year. Students who fail an exam a second time will be dismissed from the graduate program.

Qualifying Paper

The Qualifying Paper is a piece of original research of sufficient scope and quality to be potentially publishable. It cannot be identical to a paper written for a course, though it may build upon such a paper. It may be a theoretical analysis, an analysis of secondary data, or an analysis of primary data, such as might be collected in a pilot project in preparation for dissertation research. Students will develop the paper in consultation with a committee of at least two faculty members, two of whom must have a substantial (non-zero time) tenure-line appointment in the Department of Sociology. The qualifying paper should be completed and submitted to the committee for evaluation by April 1st of the student's third year in the program.

The student's committee will evaluate the paper and provide a written assessment by May 1st of the student's third year. With respect to meeting the program requirement, qualifying papers will be given a grade of **high pass** (distinction), **pass**, or **fail**. Students who fail the qualifying paper requirement will have 5 months to revise the qualifying paper; the student's committee will provide clear instructions about what revisions are necessary. Students who fail to pass the qualifying paper requirement a second time will be dismissed from the graduate program.

For papers that pass the requirement, the assessment will include a review that speaks to (1) whether the paper is currently publishable and how the student should invest in attempting to publish it, and (2) what types of revisions the student should be pursuing to ready the paper for publication. Additionally, the committee should set up a meeting with the student to discuss these reviews, with this meeting taking place before September 1 of the student's 4th year. **To fulfill the requirement, the student, in close consultation with her/his advisor, must submit the paper to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.**

THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation demonstrates the student's scholarly expertise on a research problem that the student selects. A dissertation committee assists in selecting and developing the research problem, and evaluates the student's work on that problem.

Dissertation Committee

In consultation with their advisor and the DGS, students should assemble dissertation committees with individuals who are specialists on some aspect of the proposed dissertation. Students should contact the DGS and their advisor to let them know which faculty members have agreed to serve. With the concurrence of the Head, the Department of Sociology then submits the proposed committee members to the Graduate College. If, at any point, the dissertation topic changes, a change in the composition of the committee may be required.

Appointment of Doctoral Committee

The Dean of the Graduate College formally appoints this committee to conduct the preliminary oral examination on the proposed dissertation research (the "proposal defense") and later appoints a committee to conduct the final oral examination on the completed dissertation. The same persons may (and typically do) serve on both committees. Note that the official terminology can be a little confusing: the Graduate College uses the term "Qualifying Exam" to refer to what are commonly called the area exams (see above); "Preliminary Exam" refers to the proposal defense; while "Final Exam" refers to the dissertation defense. Students may take SOC 598 in conjunction with writing dissertation proposal.

Committee Membership and Structure

Dissertation committees must consist of at least four voting members, one of whom should be the student's advisor, at least three of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least two of whom must also be tenured at the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois (UIUC). If there are more than four voting members on the committee, at least half of the voting members must be members of the Graduate Faculty. Three members of the dissertation committee must be sociology faculty, of whom two must have material appointments (i.e., greater than 0% time) in the Department of Sociology. The Chair of a dissertation committee must have a primary appointment (i.e., greater than 25% time) in the Department of Sociology.

All faculty members with rank of assistant professor or above are eligible for nomination to the UIUC Graduate Faculty by the Department of Sociology. The student should check with the DGS on the Graduate Faculty status of all prospective members of the dissertation committee. Committee members who leave UIUC may continue to serve and participate in the final oral examination for a period of up to three years after leaving the university.

Each dissertation committee must have a chair. The chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. The dissertation committee chair is responsible for convening the committee, conducting the exami-

nation, and submitting the Preliminary Exam Result form to the unit in which the student is enrolled and to the Graduate College.

At the discretion of the chair, a dissertation committee may have a director. A director of research does not need to have a material appointment in the Department of Sociology. Where there is a distinction, the chair, as noted above, organizes examinations and handles the paperwork, and the director acts as primary mentor on the research. Where there is no distinction (the typical case in our department), the chair takes both sets of responsibilities.

Committee Duties

The student must consult frequently with the chair, the director, and other committee members when developing a dissertation proposal and when doing research for the thesis and its defense. The primary duties of the dissertation committee are:

- to examine and evaluate the student's dissertation proposal at the preliminary examination (i.e., the proposal defense);
- to examine and evaluate the student's completed doctoral dissertation at the final oral examination (i.e., the dissertation defense).

The chair is responsible for reporting to the DGS on the student's progress, committee actions, changes in committee composition, etc.

Proposal Defense: Preliminary Examination

The preliminary examination in the Department of Sociology is a formal oral examination. It is based on a written dissertation proposal (see below) that the student has developed in consultation with the director of the proposed research and with the other members of the dissertation committee. **The Preliminary Examination must be completed by the end of year five.**

Preliminary examinations are open to all faculty and graduate students, but only the committee members have voice and vote (unless faculty arrange otherwise in advance with the chair of the committee).

Before scheduling a preliminary examination, a student must have successfully completed all required coursework and the Qualifying Paper and have passed both Qualifying Examinations. Students are required to prepare and submit an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval of their dissertation research project before they defend their dissertation proposal.

Scheduling the Preliminary Examination

Students may schedule the preliminary examination only after receiving confirmation from the Director of Graduate Studies that they have completed all course work and passed the Qualifying Paper and Qualifying Examinations.

Students are responsible for starting the process to appoint a preliminary exam committee through submitting a request through the Graduate College Student Portal. Please see the Graduate College's

website for more information.⁵ The request will be sent to the department for review and submission to the Graduate College. Requests must be submitted at least **THREE weeks before** the intended date of the exam.

According to department norms, the preliminary examination should not be scheduled in the first or last two weeks of instruction, on reading days, during final examinations, registration periods, on weekends, or on Fridays after 2 p.m. if a faculty meeting is scheduled; nor should they be scheduled during the summer months or winter recess unless the entire committee can attend (there can be no substitutions). Students must remind committee members of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal is a detailed research plan, a contract, a work schedule, as well as a road map. Although proposals will vary according to the area of inquiry, the available data, and the mode of analysis, each should be approximately 25–35 pages long (i.e., 6,000–9,000 words) and contain the following components:

- Problem Statement
 - present a clearly defined research topic of sociological importance
 - concisely state the specific research question(s) or hypotheses for the study
- Research Objectives
 - explain how your research will contribute to solving a question or problem of general sociological importance
 - review the existing theoretical literature covering the issues of importance to your research
 - define the specific terms, concepts, and measures you are using, and how you will approach their operationalization
- Methods
 - describe your methodology in detail, i.e. explain how you will investigate the problem
 - provide a justification for your method selection, i.e. explain how the methods you will employ following logically from your proposed goals. This should include a review of how previous studies have approached your topic methodologically.
- Data
 - provide detailed information on the data being brought to bear on your question, i.e. explain which evidence will you collect and where it will come from
- Feasibility and Significance
 - explain why you are qualified to undertake this research, i.e. discuss the skills you presently have as well as those that you need to complete your project

⁵<https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis/submitting-doctoral-committee-requests>

- explain when you plan to complete the project and what you have done to make its completion feasible by that time; include a calendar with key deadlines
- explain why the knowledge gained from your project is worth knowing
- Bibliography
- Appendices
 - if applicable, include drafts of your survey questions, interview questions, etc.
 - include your application to the Institutional Review Board

Circulating the Proposal

At least THREE weeks prior to the date of the preliminary examination, the student must circulate copies of the dissertation proposal to committee members and give one copy to the Graduate support staff for the student's permanent file. At that time, the student must also submit an abstract (one or two pages) to the Graduate support staff, who will distribute it to all members of the faculty and all of the graduate students. The **abstract must include** the following information:

- the student's name;
- the date, time, and location of the preliminary examination;
- the names, titles and affiliations of the members of the Preliminary Examination Committee;
- a working title for the dissertation;
- an abstract that summarizes the proposed dissertation (200–250 words).

Evaluating the Proposal

The examining committee chair records the results of the examination (pass, fail, or adjourn) on a form, "Certificate of Result of Preliminary Examination for the Doctoral Degree" and forwards them to the Departmental support staff who gives the results to the Graduate College within 30 days.

If the dissertation proposal is not approved ("fail"), the student may take the examination a second time. The student must submit a revised dissertation proposal to their committee and the Graduate support staff for their permanent file, distribute a new abstract to all sociology faculty, and schedule a new examination time and place in the same manner specified above. Students who fail a second time must petition the Committee to take the examination a third time.

If the dissertation proposal is approved and the project is later found not to be feasible, the student must submit a new proposal to the Committee and defend it according to the above procedures.

If five years elapse between the date the student passed the preliminary examination and the date of the final oral dissertation defense, then the Graduate College requires the student to retake the preliminary examination. This can be completed at the same time as the final examination.

Seeking Funding for the Research

Students are strongly encouraged to identify and apply for a grant supporting their dissertation research within 6 months after defending their dissertation proposal. Once they have done so, students should send a copy of the grant application to the DGS, who will place it into the student's permanent file. Failure to identify and apply for a grant will be noted in a student's annual review.

Dissertation Defense: Final Oral Examination

Students must register for SOC 599 in the semester of the dissertation's defense. Students can register for 0 units of SOC 599. At the beginning of the semester, students should notify the DGS in writing of their plans to defend (a brief dated note is sufficient). The student's dissertation committee gives the final oral examination after the dissertation text is completed. In the oral examination the student summarizes the research problem, the theories and the previous studies that generated the research questions, the methods employed to answer the questions, the results, and the conclusions that can be drawn. After giving the summary the student answers questions put by the dissertation committee about the ideas, questions, methods, results, and inferences.

Scheduling the Final Oral Examination

Students are responsible for starting the process to appoint a final exam committee through submitting a request through the Graduate College Student Portal. Please see the Graduate College's website for more information.⁶ The request will be sent to the department for review and submission to the Graduate College. Requests must be submitted at least **THREE weeks before** the intended date of the exam.

According to department norms, the final examination should not be scheduled in the first or last two weeks of instruction, on reading days, during final examinations, registration periods, on weekends, or on Fridays after 2 p.m. if a faculty meeting is scheduled; nor should they be scheduled during the summer months or winter recess unless the entire committee can attend (there can be no substitutions). Students must remind committee members of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

Providing Reading Copies of the Dissertation

Students must give copies of the final dissertation manuscript to members of the Committee and the Department Head (for review by the faculty and graduate students) **at least THREE weeks** before the day of the final oral examination.

⁶<https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis/submitting-doctoral-committee-requests>

Circulating an Abstract of the Dissertation

At least two weeks prior to the date of the final oral examination, the student must circulate an abstract of the dissertation (one or two pages) to the Graduate support staff, who will distribute it to all members of the faculty and all of the graduate students. The **abstract must include** the following information:

- the student's name;
- the date, time, and location of the final oral examination;
- the names, titles, and affiliations of the members of the Dissertation Committee;
- the title of the dissertation;
- an abstract that summarizes the dissertation (200–250 words).

Final oral examinations are open to the public, but voting is restricted to the eligible members of the dissertation committee.

Adviser/Committee Approval

Adviser/committee approval is indicated by the signed Thesis/Dissertation Approval (TDA) form. Because revisions requested by a student's adviser or committee may cause a change in pagination or format, students should only submit their thesis to the departmental thesis reviewer after all revisions have been approved. Work with your department on completion and submission of the TDA form.

Submitting Your Thesis for Graduate College Review and Deposit

Your thesis deposit is not complete until you have made all corrections requested by the Graduate College Thesis Office and have submitted all supporting items required for the deposit. All corrections and additional materials must be received in satisfactory condition by the Thesis Office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day of the deposit deadline for your intended graduation period. Once the thesis or dissertation has been approved for deposit by the Graduate College, no additional changes to the document will be allowed. Note: The Graduate College does not accept emailed or hard copy thesis submissions for review or deposit. To ensure that you are meeting the most current requirements, please check the Graduate College's website:

<https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis/submit>

EVALUATION OF GOOD STANDING & PROGRESS

Graduate College and Department rules require that students be informed annually of their progress in meeting requirements and their likelihood of completing the doctoral program. Near the end of the spring semester, the sociology graduate faculty meet (i.e., complete the “annual review”) to evaluate each student’s progress, course load, course completion, and grades. The faculty also discuss students’ performance as teaching assistants, teaching fellows, or research assistants, and any special accomplishments such as presenting at conferences or other meetings, publishing papers, or receiving grants or teaching awards. Each student’s progress is compared to the standards for normal progress described below, and to that of other students—particularly those who entered in the same year. After the faculty meeting, the DGS sends a letter to each student that:

- summarizes the evaluation of progress and standing;
- conveys any special commendations or concerns;
- and states any specific risks to good standing, with the steps and deadlines for correcting those risks.

As required by the UIUC Graduate College, the DGS reports to the Dean of the Graduate College on any students who were found not to be in good standing.

Normal Progress

Normally, students are expected to complete course work and other degree requirements in a reasonable time. This is currently indicated by completing:

- Required core courses in the first 1 1/2 years.
- Additional required and elective courses within the first 2 1/2 years.
- Qualifying Examinations by the end of the 3rd year.
(SOC 597 can be taken as a readings course in preparation for qualifying examinations.)
- Qualifying Paper by the end of the 3rd year.
- Preliminary Examination (dissertation proposal defense) by the end of the 4th year.
- Dissertation defense within 7 years.

Grades in Required Courses

Students must earn a **B** or better in any required course. A grade of **C** in a required sociology core or graduate area sociology course indicates an academic deficiency that initiates a consultation with the course instructor, the Department Head, and the DGS.

Grade Point Average

Students must maintain grade point averages (GPAs) of at least 3.25 every semester. The GPA reflects all course work graded **A** through **F** and “absent” (AB). It excludes courses with grades of credit (CR), no credit (NC), incomplete (I), deferred (DF), satisfactory (S), or unsatisfactory (U); and excludes course work completed at other institutions; and undergraduate courses taken for credit in semester hours.

EXPECTED TIMELINE



Defending the Dissertation within Five Years

The faculty discuss the case of any student who has not defended the dissertation within five years. The student could be deemed in bad standing, depending on the other things normally considered in the student's annual review. More commonly, the student will be notified of marginal progress. All students passing the five-year mark will be reminded of the seven year limit (see below).

Students should avoid incomplete ("I") grades. A history of I grades indicates an inability to handle a normal workload and jeopardizes good standing and financial aid. If course work is not completed by the last day of instruction of the following semester, an **I** reverts to an **F**. Students may petition the Department of Sociology and the Graduate College to extend the I beyond this "lapse" date or to drop the course retroactively; however, the department rarely approves such petitions. If an **I** reverts to an **F**, after the work is completed and graded and with the approval of the instructor and the DGS, a student may petition the Graduate College to change the grade.

Seven-Year Limit

Graduate College rules allow no more than seven years for completion of the doctoral program (six for students who entered with a Master's degree). To access the petition form to make a request for an exception to a Graduate College policy or deadline, one will first need to login to the Graduate College Student Portal.

<https://grad.illinois.edu/gsas/gradpetition>

Deadline Extensions

Students may formally petition the Graduate College for an exception to a published Graduate College policy or deadline. Prior to filing this request, it is important for students to consult with their advisor and the DGS regarding their academic needs or concerns. The student must be explicit about reasons for the request and must include a projected schedule (i.e., timeline) that shows when requirements will be met. The student's advisor must approve the request. Family and medical leave are common reasons for approved extensions of deadlines. Extensions also may be approved for special academic needs such as the need to conduct fieldwork abroad. More information about the petition process can be found here:

<https://grad.illinois.edu/gsas/gradpetition>

The department will take extra steps to support students who need to extend their time to degree beyond seven years. Specifically, the student will meet with their advisor and the DGS once per semester to discuss the obstacles to completing the degree and to make a plan for moving forward. The DGS and the student's advisor will provide the student with a written summary of the meeting that outlines next steps and shared expectations.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

The Department follows the UIUC Graduate College policies on Leaves of Absence and Absence without Leave. According to Graduate College policy, graduate students in degree-seeking programs are entitled to a total of two terms (fall and/or spring semesters) of academic leave of the types described below, in the course of a single degree program. However, students must document their request for a leave and meet the eligibility requirements. Students who anticipate not being enrolled for one or more terms, (fall or spring semesters, not summer), for whatever reason must meet with their program adviser **before the first day of classes of their period of non-enrollment** to apply for and receive approval for an Academic Leave of Absence.

There are two categories of Academic Leaves of Absence:

- **Personal Academic Leaves of Absence** may be requested for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to leave for health reasons, for personal reasons, for active military service, or to take care of dependents or family members. Students who are on an approved Personal Academic Leave of Absence use the leave for personal reasons and not to make progress on the degree. In addition, students on Personal Academic Leaves of Absence should not expect that faculty will provide feedback on academic work, including proposals or drafts of theses.
- **Academic Progress Leaves of Absence** may be requested for instances of academic activity such as Study Abroad when the student registers at another institution, or fieldwork when the student is not using UIUC resources including faculty time, nor receiving financial support paid through the University. Students who are on an approved Academic Progress Leave of Absence do use the Leave to make progress toward completion of the degree, but must not use campus resources. Expectations of progress to be made during the Leave should be documented in the student's academic file.

All Academic Leaves must be requested before the term begins. Students must submit a leave of absence request via the Graduate College's website. Please see Part I, Chapter 2, §2.5 of *The Graduate College Handbook* for more information.⁷

Please note that an Academic Leave of Absence cannot be requested retroactively, cannot be used to return to good standing, and cannot be used to extend the time to degree. The maximum allowed Academic Leave of Absence is two terms (spring or fall) during a student's degree program. These terms may be consecutive terms or terms approved individually.

There are potentially negative consequences for failing to request an Academic Leave of Absence. Students who do not enroll and do not meet with the program and document their status with an approved Academic Leave of Absence before a period of non-enrollment begins are considered Absent without Leave. A program may put an advising hold on a student who is Absent without Leave. A student who is Absent without Leave may be prevented from re-enrolling, may have additional degree requirements to complete if allowed to return, or may be subject to new degree requirements.

⁷<https://grad.illinois.edu/sites/grad.illinois.edu/files/pdfs/handbook.pdf>

FUNDING

Students admitted to the graduate program are promised five years of funding, to be used in their first five years. For most students, funding will come as a 50% teaching assistantship (TA) during the fall and spring semesters. Students will be consulted in advance about available appointments, and the department will make an effort to assign students to courses that align with their preferences. The purpose of this section of the Handbook is to clarify three aspects of this funding.

Policies Regarding Departmental Funding & Teaching Assistantships

For the first five years in the program, students have the support of departmental funding. A 50% teaching assistantship (TA) or research assistantship (RA) in sociology is not only an important part of students' professionalization, but it also helps to ensure that students can concentrate on their studies without worrying about finances. Each semester, students will be asked for their preferences, and the department will make an effort to honor them. Note, however, that students do not choose their funding; this is the prerogative of the department.

While the department expects students to work within our program, we also understand that some students may have unique opportunities in other departments or to be supported by external funding. In such cases, we encourage you to explore those options and discuss them with us. In other words, students are required to accept the funding offered by the department each semester for their first five years in the program unless they have been “released” to take an outside appointment. For example, the department is likely to release a student who receives a prestigious (internal or external) grant or has an opportunity that will contribute meaningfully to their professionalization. To be “released,” students must get approval from the DGS, in consultation with the Head.

Funding May Not Be Banked

As specified in the student's admission letter, the department is obligated to offer students funding during their first five years in the graduate program. This does not mean, however, that students can “bank” those years of funding by taking outside appointments or receiving external funding. For example, a student who is released to accept a TA position outside of the department during their second year should not expect funding from sociology during their sixth year.

Online Opportunities May Be Available

The department occasionally has opportunities for students to work as TAs for online courses. Although the department prefers that all TAs be in residence in Urbana-Champaign, online appointments may be given to students who are away from campus. For example, the department may prioritize students who are undertaking their fieldwork. This is not guaranteed, however; students should therefore secure external funding to support data collection away from campus.

GRADUATE INSTRUCTORS

All graduate students are strongly encouraged to teach two undergraduate courses before they deposit their dissertations. In addition to the Teaching Practicum (SOC 510), which is the only required course offered by the department about teaching, students are encouraged to take EPOL 554: College Teaching. It is offered annually by the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. Graduate Instructors will be formally observed by their advisor member each semester that they teach. Because we believe that it is important for Graduate Instructors to teach without the assistance of a Teaching Assistant, their courses will be capped at a reasonable size.

To ensure that students will have ample opportunity to teach, the department will offer sections of the following courses for graduate instructors every semester:

- SOC 100: Introduction to Sociology
- SOC 101: Sociology of Gender
- SOC 200: Introduction to Sociological Theory
- SOC 225: Race and Ethnicity
- SOC 275: Criminology
- SOC 280: Introduction to Social Statistics

Students are required to have passed both qualifying exams and be in good academic standing before they are eligible to teach.

The department will invite applications from students to teach twice during the academic year. To apply, students should submit the following information:

- A letter requesting to teach a specific course
- A copy of their Teaching Philosophy
- A copy of their transcripts
- A letter of recommendation (sent directly by their advisor) in which the advisor formally commits to completing a classroom observation

MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Master's Degree

The Department does not offer a Master's degree program. All graduate students enter the doctoral program. The Master's degree may be granted as an intermediate step on the way to the Ph.D. Students qualify for the Master's degree by receiving departmental certification as having completed a suitable Qualifying Paper (see page 7) and completing the necessary coursework (see below). After completing the requirements for the MA, you may send a petition to the Graduate College for your MA to be included on your transcript. You may do that as soon as you're done with the requirements. The petition will have to be approved by the Head and the DGS.

Credit toward a Master's Degree

The Graduate College may give students up to five units of credit toward a master's degree for graduate-level courses taken at an accredited institution within the past five years that the Sociology Department deems appropriate to count toward the student's Master's degree. The Graduate College will not give any credit for courses taken elsewhere until students have earned two units of UIUC credit.

Required Courses

- One statistics course (SOC 485 or SOC 586)
- One theory course (SOC 500 or SOC 501)
- One methods course (SOC 571, SOC 581, SOC 583, SOC 587, or SOC 590)
- Two professionalization courses (Professionalization Seminar and Teaching Practicum; 2 semesters, 4 credit hours)
- Six additional courses at the 400 or 500 level:
 - At least four of these must be in sociology
 - At least four of these must be at the 500 level

Summary

- Total of eleven graduate courses
- At least five taken at UIUC campus
- At least nine in sociology
- At least four at the 500 level