

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

**GRADUATE PROGRAM
HANDBOOK**

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Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843-4351
(979) 845-5133

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Preface

Progressing through the graduate program in Sociology at Texas A&M University requires that students and faculty be familiar with the details of the graduate program. The purpose of this handbook is to provide a convenient reference for answering questions students and faculty may have about the current policies and procedures of our graduate program. For students new to the program, we hope the handbook provides a useful overview of departmental life and, even more, an encouragement to become an active participant in that life.

Please note that this handbook is meant to serve as a guide. It is not an official statement of university policy and should not be relied upon in place of graduate catalogs or other official university publications. While every effort has been made to provide correct and up to date information about university policies, students and faculty should consult the Texas A&M University Graduate Catalog for the official statements on university policies regarding degree requirements and related matters. View this handbook as a potential starting place to find out what you need to know on a wide variety of important topics.

This document is maintained by the department and is updated periodically to reflect relevant changes. If you find an error or notice information left out which should be included, please contact the graduate advisor or department head so appropriate revisions can be made.

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

COURSE WORK

1.0 Program Structure

Students may earn a master's degree and a doctoral degree in the Sociology Department. The master's degree may or may not entail completion of a thesis. Students who plan to continue with graduate studies will be better served by taking the thesis option or the master's paper option. The thesis involves a formal thesis and the student earns a Master's Degree. The Master's Paper option is for students who are pursuing their doctoral degree, are working directly through all the requirements, and do not wish to earn an official Master's Degree. The non-thesis option for a Master's Degree provides good preparation for work in an applied research setting. Rely on your committee chair to advise you about these three options.

1.1 Master's Degree (Thesis Option)

The master's degree (thesis option) requires a minimum of **thirty-two credit hours** of work. In addition, students must write a research thesis, which entails preparation of a research proposal and a thesis. The thesis is typically of journal article length and potentially publishable in quality, reporting on empirical research or a critical review of literature. Both the proposal and the thesis require an oral defense.

Prerequisites. Entry into the master's program presupposes that students have completed preliminary courses in sociological theory, research methods, and statistics, equivalent to our courses SOCI 430, SOCI 420, and STAT 651. Students who have not will be required to pass the missing course work here as a condition of their enrollment in the program.

Required Courses. Eight courses (worth twenty-two hours) are required for completion of the master's degree. Two courses (six hours) are in theory: 611 Classical Sociological Theory and 615 Contemporary Sociological Theory. Students must take three methods courses (for three hours each; nine hours total): 623 Measurement of Sociological Parameters, 624 Qualitative Methodology OR 604 Comparative Historical Methods, and 631 Seminar in Sociological Research (Quantitative). In addition, students must take three professional development courses (worth 6 hours): 691 Master's Paper Class (taken in the Spring semester of the student's first year), 680 Teaching Undergraduate Sociology: Overview of Principles and Practices, and 681 Professional Seminar in Sociology (a zero-hour introductory professional development seminar devoted to professional training in research).

Students must earn a grade of B or higher in all required courses to receive credit. Students who fail to do so may retake the required course one time. Failure to earn a B after repeating the course will result in the student being dropped from the program.

Elective Courses. Two courses (six hours) are free electives, one of which must be taken in the sociology department. Students may wish to use one of these electives to receive additional training in

statistics.

Research Hours. Master's students will be required to take a total of eight hours of 691—devoted to research on the master's thesis (note that the Master's paper course is 3 of these credits, so students must take 5 more hours of 691).

1.2 Master's Degree (Non-Thesis Option)

Course requirements for the master's degree (non-thesis option) are identical to those for the thesis option with these exceptions: Additional course work is substituted for a written thesis, and so this degree program requires no research hours. Elective hours are increased as follows. The number of elective hours taken is increased to 21, with 6 hours being directed individual study taken in consultation with the committee. Six elective hours are to be taken in courses offered outside the department in a supporting field, as approved by the student's advisory committee. In addition, the student is required to pass an oral examination conducted by the student's advisory committee.

1.3 Master's Paper Requirement in pursuit of the Doctoral Degree

Course requirements for the Master's Paper program are identical to those for the thesis option. The only difference is that no formal thesis is completed but rather a paper of publishable quality is required. This paper does not go through the formal channels of a thesis (that is, it does not have to meet any university office of graduate studies requirements). The student's committee members sign an internal document when the paper is completed to the satisfaction of the committee.

1.4 Doctoral Degree

Concentrations:

- (1) Crime, Law, and Deviance
- (2) Culture
- (3) Demography
- (4) Organizational, Political and Economic Sociology
- (5) Race, Class and Gender
- (6) Social Psychology

The doctoral degree requires a minimum of **sixty-four hours** of course work beyond the master's degree or master's paper program. In addition, students must pass a preliminary examination in the student's specialty areas. The preliminary examination is a written and oral examination administered by the student's committee. The committee will give explicit requirements about the form of the exam to the student.

Students must also successfully complete and orally defend a written dissertation, which can be a book length monograph or several separate articles. The dissertation is original research the student has accomplished under the guidance of his or her committee. Part of this process includes preparation and defense of a dissertation proposal.

Doctoral students are required to fulfill requirements for a major and a minor.

The major will consist of four courses from a single area of concentration.

The minor will consist of three courses from a single area of concentration.

The major and minor may be comprised of courses from the same area of concentration providing the student's committee approves the coursework for the major and the coursework for the minor as reflecting distinct specializations within the area of concentration.

The minor (but not the major) may be constructed from an "open" concentration. That is, coursework for the minor may come from two or more concentrations if the student's committee approves the three courses as reflecting a coherent program of study.

Prerequisites. All courses required for the master's degree are prerequisites for the Ph.D. degree.

Required Courses. There are no specifically required courses in the doctoral program.

Coursework for the major concentration should include at least one survey seminar.

Doctoral students will take qualifying exams in both their major and minor areas of concentration. The department requirements for the distribution of course hours within the 64 hours minimum hours required by the University should be amended as follows.

A minimum of 21 hours in areas of concentration (12 hours in the major and 9 hours in the minor).

One Sociology Publications Course (e.g., 683) (3 hours).

A minimum of 18 Research Hours (691).

22 additional hours in Research Hours (691) or Electives Courses (which may also be additional courses in students' major or minor area).

Note: students may only take 6 hours of readings courses (685's).

2.0 Course Offerings

With committee approval, a student may take some upper division undergraduate courses for graduate credit. (There is a limit of nine hours that may be used in this way for a master's degree.) This possibility significantly expands the range of substantive areas students may study. (One might give special consideration to upper division honors courses.)

Students should expect to meet a higher standard than undergraduates do and to meet additional course requirements.

Students should also be alert for courses offered in other departments in the social sciences or humanities that may supplement instruction critical for their scholarly development.

2.2 Frequency of Course Offerings.

Required courses are offered at least once every year. Other courses listed in the catalog are offered at least once every three years. Occasional courses, listed as 689s or as rotating topics seminars within specific areas may only be offered once.

2.3 Readings Courses

Readings courses, though no substitute for seminars, are an important way to tailor one's graduate training for in-depth study of a particular subject matter. Students are encouraged to meet with faculty to explore the possibility of undertaking specialized study.

Students may include up to 6 hours of readings courses (685's) toward their combined master's and doctoral degree plans with the following restrictions:

Readings courses may not be used to take the place of required theory and methods courses or a survey course in the student's major area of concentration.

Readings courses taken will be excluded from calculations of student grade point ratio used in evaluations for department assistantships.

It is necessary to make arrangements for the course during the semester prior to the time you intend to undertake the study. Other faculty commitments may make it impossible for them to do a readings course with the students during a particular semester.

It is wise, though not mandatory, to have a specific project of study in mind before making initial contact with a faculty member.

2.4 Research Courses

Research courses provide students with time to conduct research for their master's thesis or dissertation. Before signing up for research hours, it is wise to meet with the chair of your committee to agree upon specific objectives to be accomplished during the semester.

Research courses do not receive letter grades until after a successful oral defense of the thesis or dissertation.

2.5 New Courses (689s/489s)

Courses not listed in the catalog are given the number 689, for graduate seminars, or 489, for upper division undergraduate courses. Some of these are occasional courses offered one time only or else irregularly. Do not overlook these when registering. Even if they do not fit into your previous plan of study (see 3.0 Degree Plans below), plans of study are easily changed when doing so allows students to better meet their educational goals.

2.6 Proseminars

The department requires students to take a four-hour sequence for professional training in teaching and research. Their aim is provide practical guidance about how to perform effectively in these two central areas of professional life at A&M and after graduation.

The required Proseminar is structured in two semesters. The first semester (zero credit hours) will cover issues related to professional socialization within the discipline of sociology. The ASA Code of Ethics is to be covered in one session of the seminar. The second semester will cover teaching sociology (3 credit hours). Both of these Proseminars will be offered once a year.

Students must take both semesters to graduate. Students must take the teaching Proseminar before they teach for the department.

Additional Proseminars are taught regularly. These include proseminars addressing publishing, grant-writing and preparing for the job market.

3.0 Degree Plans

3.1 Purpose of Degree Plans

Degree Plans are forms filed with the Office of Graduate Studies, which list the courses a graduate student plans to take to fulfill the degree requirements for a master's or Ph.D. degree. In addition, the form lists the members (and indicates the chairperson) of the student's committee.

3.2 How and When to File Degree Plans

The degree plan requires that the student has formed a committee to supervise his or her graduate studies and that both the student and the committee agree on a proposed outline of courses to satisfy degree requirements.

Degree plan forms can be downloaded from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) website.

The information requested is straightforward and self-explanatory. Questions and requests for clarifications may be addressed to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, phone 845-3631; email ogaps@tamu.edu; mail stop 1113, or the department graduate advisor.

There are a few things to note about filling out the form. First, no course hours listed on the form for one degree (master's) may be listed again for another degree (Ph.D.). Second, any graduate course which you do not wish to have included in your degree plan may be listed in the section entitled "Prerequisites or Other Courses Not applicable for Graduate credit." (Graduate courses listed in this section will not be included in your degree plan grade point ratio but will be included in your cumulative grade point ratio.)

You may find the following check list helpful in filling out your degree plan:

- Make sure you have included all required courses and sufficient electives and research hours.
- List only courses to be utilized for credit toward the degree being sought.
- Do not list a course that has been used previously toward another degree.
- In the tiny box entitled “PREREQUISITES OR OTHER COURSES Not Applicable for Graduate Credit” list courses required for admission, other prerequisites, or special cases.
- Provide official course numbers and department abbreviations.
- List 689 special topics courses by exact course title.
- List TAMU course titles exactly as in your registration record.
- List official grades received or leave grade blank for courses not yet taken.
- All committee members should be on the graduate faculty.
- Provide correct names and official department abbreviations for committee members.
- The Degree Plan form must be approved and signed by the student’s committee, and the department head.

Students are supposed to complete a degree plan at the end of their first year of study. Many students wish to wait longer than this to file a plan because they are uncertain about who they want to serve on their committee and which courses they ought to take to complete their degree program. These are not good reasons to delay, however, especially since delay may slow student progress through the program. To allay concerns about Forming a Committee and Changing Course Plans, read on.

3.3 Forming a Committee

Forming a committee to guide one's graduate study is a big decision, and should be done with care.

Students need to know mainly three things to pick a committee: first, what general topical areas or subfields in sociology are particularly interesting to them; second, which of our faculty share strong interests in these areas; and, third, how many people need to be on a committee.

Master’s committees must have at least three members, one of whom must come from outside the department. Ph.D. committees must have at least four members, one of whom must come from outside the department. The chair of any graduate committee must be a member of the department.

Once students know their interest areas and how they overlap with those of the faculty, they should visit with the faculty whose interests they share, take courses with them if possible, talk with them at department gatherings, and by appointment in their offices. Make your shared interests known. If you

can, reveal something about why you find the area intellectually interesting and what your professional aspirations are.

After a few weeks of diligent inquiry, you should be in a position to know fairly well those people on the faculty who are likely candidates to serve as committee members. (You may also find talking with fellow graduate students especially helpful in this regard.)

Visit your potential choice for committee chair and explore the possibilities of that person serving as your chairperson. If a match is made, then ask the chairperson for recommendations for committee members. (This is a particularly valuable way to determine who the outside committee member should be.) Then visit with those people whom you and your chairperson agreed would be good committee members, and soon the job will be done.

Sometimes it becomes clear to the student (or the committee members) that the student's progress through the program would be better served by making a change in the committee, whether changing a member or even changing the chair. If so, the change should be made as soon as possible, by petitioning the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. (Petitions can be obtained from the OGAPS website.)

The graduate advisor will be glad to assist you if you need help.

Part II

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

4.0 Course Grades

Course grades are an important indicator of one's progress in graduate study. Speaking generally, grades below B are not regarded as acceptable at the graduate level. A student who earns a grade of C or below in a required course will have to repeat the course and earn a grade of B or else face being dropped from the program. Students cannot graduate with grades of D or F in courses on their degree plan. Otherwise, students must maintain a grade point ratio of 3.00 to remain in the program. Note that some fellowships, assistantships, or other awards may specify a higher minimum grade point ratio to retain the award.

4.1 Incompletes

Students should be careful to complete their courses in the semester in which they are enrolled. Incompletes may be awarded, but only under exceptional circumstances as spelled out in the University's Regulations. Failure to clear up an incomplete within one semester causes the incomplete to be recorded as a failure ("F").

5.0 Faculty Reviews

Evaluation of the work of teaching assistants is central to the department's aim to assure high quality undergraduate instruction. Yet it requires a flexible procedure because of the wide range of tasks assistants are required to perform and because teaching is not an activity that can be easily judged by mechanical means, over the short-term.

The evaluation process is divided into two parts. The first considers teaching assistants who are responsible for instructing their own course. The second considers teaching assistants who are helping faculty with their courses.

5.1. Teaching Assistants with Full Course Responsibility

The work of teaching assistants with full course responsibility will be evaluated by multiple means. Responsibility for coordinating the evaluation will rest with the graduate advisors.

First, before the beginning of the semester in which they are to teach, they will submit a copy of their proposed course outline to an advisor of their choosing, or the professor chairing the teaching proseminar. The advisor will meet with the assistant to review the course plan, offering comments to indicate its strengths and weaknesses. (If necessary the process will be repeated until a course outline is produced that the graduate advisors approve.)

Second, an advisor will visit each assistant's class at least twice over the course of the semester. The visiting faculty member will meet with the assistant afterwards providing comments on the conduct of the class.

Third, courses will be subject to the standard student evaluation, the results of which will be given to the assistant and the graduate advisors. The graduate advisor will arrange to meet with the assistants after the evaluations are distributed to review their content and usefulness as a guide for improving the quality of course instruction.

5.2. Teaching Assistants Aiding Faculty

The work of teaching assistants aiding faculty is varied in content, ranging from library research necessary to support course preparation to meeting student discussion sections. The most important evaluation will occur informally throughout the semester as individual faculty counsel with their assistants. More formal performance evaluations to augment this process must be open-ended and task related. Two measures will be used.

First, the faculty to whom assistants are assigned will evaluate their assistant's performance at the end of the semester. They will provide a memo to the evaluation committee which (a) describes the task or tasks which they asked the assistant to perform, (b) provides a statement of the assistant's strengths and weaknesses in performing each task, and (c) provides an overall assessment of the assistant's performance. The department has a standard form for this evaluation (Appendix 2).

Second, also at the end of the semester, the assistants will provide a memo to the graduate advisors (a) describing the tasks they were asked to perform, (b) assessing the strength and weaknesses of their performance of each task, and (c) offering an overall assessment of their performance.

6.0 Formal Examinations

6.1 Master's Degree Final Examination

Before graduating, at the end of their degree program, master's students must pass a final oral examination. The examination is conducted by the student's committee, but all graduate faculty are invited to attend. The examination covers all work taken on the degree plan and, when appropriate, the results of the thesis project. A student who fails will have one opportunity to repeat the examination.

6.2 Master's Paper Examination. Ordinarily a student will present his or her paper to the committee and other interested faculty and students; however, this is a committee decision.

6.2 Doctoral Preliminary Examination

The preliminary examination tests students' competence in their areas of specialization.

Students decide on specialty areas in consultation with their committee.

The preliminary examination has both a written and an oral component, and is created, administered, and graded by the students' committee. Three grades are possible: Pass with distinction, pass, or fail. A student who fails the examination may retake the exam after a period of six months. Students who fail a second time are dropped from the program.

6.3 Dissertation ProposalHearing

Students must prepare a written proposal of the research they intend to do for their Ph.D. dissertation. The proposal must be approved by the students' committee. Final approval occurs after the proposal has been presented and defended at a hearing. A dissertation thesis proposal must be submitted to the office of graduate studies at least 15 working days before the request for final defense (which is officially called the final examination). Keep in mind that if human participants are involved, compliance issues must be addressed.

Committees vary in their expectations of how detailed a proposal should be and on how far along students should be in their research before having their hearing. What is constant, however, is that the proposal specify clearly *what* the research project intends to accomplish (to refute a widely accepted theory, to gather new evidence on subject about which we know too little, to offer a new theory, etc.) and *how* the study has been organized to make the research goal attainable.

Students who are unsure about how to write a proposal should consult with their committee, read previously approved proposals, and check the library for sources on the subject.

6.4 Ph.D. Final Examination

After the dissertation is completed, students defend their work in an oral examination. (Make sure to check deadline dates announced each semester by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS). Defenses must ordinarily be conducted at least one month before the degree is to be conferred.) The examination is conducted by the student's advisory committee. The examination may cover the broad field of the student's training. The major portion of the time, however, is usually devoted to the dissertation. It is recommended that the committee require students to submit their dissertation via Turnitin, which checks for plagiarism. The Head of the Department will request the dissertation submitted on Turnitin.

6.5 Required Forms

Beginning on October 5, 2020, OGAPS will only accept DocuSign documents for several forms, including the ones listed below. The OGAPS website (<http://grad.tamu.edu/Buttons/Forms-Information>) provides links to the forms.

Approval of Written Thesis Form - This is the form to complete when students complete the In House M.S. Paper. It *does not route* to OGAPS, it stays in the student's file.

Preliminary Examination Checklist and Report - This is the form to complete when students complete their preliminary oral exam (a. checklist and b. report of the preliminary examination).

Request and Announcement of the Final Examination - This is the form to complete when students want to schedule their final exam (dissertation defense).

Approval of Written Dissertation Form - This is the form students must submit to the Thesis Office along with an electronic pdf of their dissertation.

Part III STUDENT SUPPORT

7.0 Financial Aid and Assistantships

7.1 Sources of Financial Aid

Financial aid for graduate study is limited and more often awarded on the basis of merit alone rather than on need. There are three chief sources of aid available through the university: fellowships, assistantships, and employment on faculty grants.

Fellowships. Fellowships are occasionally awarded by the university. Fellowships may have special registration requirements. They offer the student a stipend.

Assistantships. Assistantships are more widely available than fellowships, but these awards are limited as well. The department regularly awards a number of teaching and research assistantships. Faculty members with internal and external grants and other sources of funding also may award research assistantships.

Teaching assistantships provide financial support for nine months. Teaching assistants are usually assigned to assist a professor in course work. Advanced students may teach one three-hour course, under the supervision of appropriate faculty. Summer assistance is sometimes available.

Research assistantships vary in term. Department assistantships are normally for the 9 month academic year.

All fellowship recipients and graduate assistants are exempt from paying out-of-state tuition rates.

Faculty Employment. Individual faculty members or institutes sometimes hire graduate students with funds from their research grants or operating budgets. The amount of financial support provided and the duties to be performed vary widely by assignment.

Those hired as graduate assistants by faculty or research institutes or other units are also exempt from paying out-of-state tuition.

7.2 Procedures and Criteria for Assigning Departmental Assistantships

GENERAL ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES

A. Organizational Recommendations

1. A “Graduate Recruitment and Admissions Committee” and a “Graduate Program Committee” should be formed.

These committees will perform the admissions functions and the function of evaluating continuing students for assignment of departmental assistantships respectively.

2. Department policy regarding the procedures for the allocation of department assistants to support faculty efforts involves, but is not exclusive of, the following:
 - a. the number of students taught,
 - b. teaching SOCI 420 and SOCI 631, and
 - c. department needs and special commitments.

B. General Procedures for Reviewing Continuing Students

1. Continuing students wishing to be considered for departmental assistantships must apply to the Graduate Evaluation Committee using standard application forms to be distributed to all students in the spring semester.

2. Completed application forms are to be returned to the graduate office by the date specified on the application form. It is solely the responsibility of the graduate student to submit a completed form with accompanying evidence of completion of various requirements.

3. Within a month of the application deadline, the committee will:

- a. review the graduate students using criteria outlined below;
- b. establish a ranking of applicants;
- c. make decisions on appointments to departmental assistantships; and
- d. notify students of the decisions.

4. Faculty members on the graduate admission/evaluation committee are to excuse themselves from scoring graduate students who were assigned to them for the previous semester (Fall) as a departmental assistant or for whom they are chairperson of either a thesis or dissertation committee.

C. Appeals Process

1. A student wishing to appeal a decision should meet first with the chair of the committee to review the decision.

2. If the student wishes to pursue the appeal further, she or he should meet with the Department Head who may appoint an independent appeals committee to review the decision.

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

A. Assignment of Assistantships to Newly Admitted Graduate Students

1. Newly admitted graduate students should be ranked for departmental assistantship awards giving approximately equal weight to the following criteria.

a. Quantitative Information including

- Graduate Record Examination scores
- Grade Point Ratio
- TOEFFL scores (foreign applicants)

b. Qualitative and/or Supplemental Information including but not limited to

- letters of recommendation
- examples of student writing
- student's statement of interest and intent
- * student's contribution to diversity of the program and profession

2. Incoming graduate students who receive graduate assistantships will be funded for two years contingent on maintaining successful progress in the program. These graduate students progress will be evaluated at the end of the first year by the Graduate Evaluation Committee. The second year of funding is contingent on (1) achieving the 3.5 grade point ratio, (2) performance on their graduate assistantship assignment when appropriate, and (3) completing at least 4 required courses.

B. Assignment of Assistantships to Continuing Students

1. To be eligible for consideration for a departmental assistantship, a student must be in good standing with the graduate school and the department.

Students who enter with a B.A. or B.S. will not ordinarily receive more than five years of funding. Students who enter with a M.A. or M.S. will not ordinarily receive more than four years of funding. Exceptions may be made in the case of extreme departmental need, or if there are other extenuating circumstances, if funding is available. The criteria to assign departmental assistantships on a competitive basis are specified below.

2. Continuing graduate students in good standing will be ranked with respect to awarding departmental assistantships according to the following four criteria: Progress in the Program, Grade Point Ratio, Teaching/Research Assistantship Evaluation, and Professional Potential.

a. Progress in the Program

Graduate students entering with a B.A. or a B.S. are expected to finish the program in five years and will be evaluated based on the following standard of progress in the program.

- At the end of 2 semesters, students are expected to have completed a minimum of 4 required courses, and all required courses should be completed by the end of 4 semesters.
- At the end of 4 semesters, students are expected to complete their master's thesis.
- At the end of 7 semesters, students are expected to complete their comprehensive exams.
- At the end of 8 semesters, students are expected to complete their dissertation

proposal.

- At the end of 10 semesters, students are expected to complete their dissertation.

Graduate students entering the program with a M.A. or M.S. are expected to finish the program in four years and will be evaluated based on the following standard of progress in the program.

- At the end of 2 semesters, students are expected to have completed a minimum of 4 required courses, and all required courses should be completed by the end of 4 semesters.
- At the end of 5 semesters, students are expected to complete their comprehensive exams.
- At the end of 6 semesters, students are expected to complete their dissertation proposal.
- At the end of 8 semesters, students are expected to complete their dissertation.

Waived courses do not count toward progress in the program for purposes of evaluation assessment.

Consideration may also be given to information provided to the committee that impede students' progress in the program (e.g., unusually time-consuming data collection, severe illness), and the following factors:

For all students: hours of coursework, completion of required courses, timely completion of incompletes (carrying two or more incompletes over two semesters is grounds to disallow participation).

For master's students: formation of thesis committee and identification of a committee chair, defense of proposal, and progress on the thesis (as reflected in letters from the chair of the student's advisory committee).

For doctoral students: identification of specialty areas, completion of specialty coursework, formation of dissertation committee and identification of a committee chair, approval of a degree plan, approval of relevant reading lists, defense of dissertation proposal, and progress on the dissertation (as reflected in letters from the chair of the student's advisory committee).

Extending the expected progress in the program clock

Extensions to the expected progress in the program period may be granted upon petition by the graduate student to the Head of the department or the Director of Graduate Studies. The purpose of these petitions is to maintain student privacy about circumstances affecting progress in the program and evaluating students fairly.

Extensions are usually for six months or one year, but a longer period may be requested in compelling circumstances. A graduate student may petition for an extension in the following cases:

- The graduate student has encountered circumstances that may seriously impede progress in the program. Such circumstances might include (but are not limited to):

- Serious illness or injury;
- Having responsibility for the primary care of an infant or small child;
- Having responsibility for the primary care of a close relative who is disabled, elderly or seriously ill;
- Any serious disruption of the academic period for unexpected reasons beyond the graduate student's control.

Petitions need to provide a written description and documentation for the circumstance. Extensions to the clock are finalized by approval from the Department Head or the Director of Graduate Admission. The Graduate Program and Evaluation Committee is informed of the decision. This extension applies solely to annual evaluations of graduate students and does not apply to requirements by the College of Liberal Arts or Texas A&M University.

b. Grade Point Ratio (GPR)

c. Teaching Assistant / Research Assistant Evaluations

The committee will evaluate student performance in previous departmental assistantships and previous non-departmental research assistantships (for students holding an assistantship only).

Assistantship evaluations are scored using a form provided as Appendix 2 to this section.

d. Professional Activity

When graduate students receive their Ph.D. they are expected to have demonstrated professional activity in the areas of teaching and research.

- Professional activity in the areas of research will be evaluated based on students'

progress in demonstrating the capacity to publish a peer-reviewed sociology article.

- Professional activity in the area of teaching will be evaluated based on the students' progress in demonstrating the capacity to competently teach a college or university course.

The Committee will also consider the following types of professional activity:

- submitting a grant or fellowship proposal,
- obtaining funding from outside the department but within the university,
- obtaining funding from outside the university,
- taking advanced methods courses in other departments, and
- engaging in collaborative analysis with faculty.

The Graduate Program Committee will place primary emphasis on professional activity during the year of the evaluation, but can consider the entire record.

Guidelines for the Graduate Program Committee

The committee will use the following guidelines when assigning a score to graduate students for professional activity. In these guidelines, semester is defined as a regular academic semester (i.e., spring and fall, not including the summer semester). There are two implications of the expectations described in these guidelines:

- Over time, graduate students are expected to become competent teachers and researchers.
- Graduate students at later stages of their graduate career will not receive the same credit for the same activities as graduate students who are earlier in their graduate career (e.g., presenting a paper at a regional conference or annual meeting, guest lecturing in a faculty member's class).

Research

In addition to Department research requirements, graduate students entering the program with a B.A. or a B.S. are expected to do the following to demonstrate professional activity in the area of research.

- At the end of 6 semesters, students are expected to present a paper at a conference (i.e., regional, national, specialty) or a department brown bag. (This paper might be developed from their Master's thesis or paper.)
- At the end of 8 semesters, students are expected to have submitted a single authored article or two coauthored articles to peer-reviewed sociology journal(s).
- At the end of 10 semesters, students are expected to have published a single authored article or two coauthored articles in peer reviewed sociology journal(s).

In addition to Department research requirements, graduate students entering the program with a M.A. or M.S. are expected to do the following to demonstrate professional activity in the area of research.

- At the end of 4 semesters, students are expected to present a paper at a conference (i.e., regional, national, specialty) or at a department brown bag.

- At the end of 6 semesters, students are expected to have submitted a single authored article or two coauthored articles to peer-reviewed sociology journal(s).
- At the end of 8 semesters, students are expected to have published a single authored article or two coauthored articles in peer-reviewed sociology journal(s).

Teaching

In addition to Departmental teaching requirements, graduate students entering the program with a B.A. or a B.S. are expected to do the following to demonstrate professional activity in the area of teaching.

- At the end of 6 semesters, students are expected to complete a teaching workshop or similar teaching activity. (This may include workshops available on campus.)
- At the end of 8 semesters, students are expected to attend teaching activities (e.g., a workshop, sessions that focus on teaching) at a professional conference or guest lecture in a faculty member's class.
- At the end of 10 semesters, students are expected to have competently taught a sociology course at a college or university.

In addition to Department teaching requirements, graduate students entering the program with a M.A. or M.S. are expected to do the following to demonstrate professional activity in the area of research.

- At the end of 4 semesters, students are expected to complete a teaching workshop or similar teaching activity on campus. (This may include workshops available on campus.)
- At the end of 6 semesters, students are expected to attend teaching activities (e.g., workshop, sessions that focus on teaching) at a professional conference or guest lecture in a faculty member's class.
- At the end of 8 semesters, students are expected to have competently taught a sociology course at a college or university.

3. Scoring Individual Items and Computing Final Evaluation Scores

Applicants will be scored on each of the *relevant* items (i.e., Progress in the Program, Grade Point Ratio, Teaching/Assistantship Evaluation, and Professional Activity) on a scale of 1 to 5 where a score of 5 indicates the highest evaluation. Scores will be assigned by all

members of the committee and averaged across committee members. The assignment of scores will be left to the judgments of committee members with the exception of grade point ratio which will convert the cumulative GPR to a 5-point basis using a formula noted below.

Progress in the Program. Applicants will be scored on their progress in the program based on the following:

5. Well beyond the guidelines
4. Beyond the guidelines
3. On track with guidelines
2. Lagging behind guidelines
1. Substantially behind guidelines

Grade Point Ratio (GPR). Applicants will be scored on their cumulative grade point ratio according to the following.

Applicant's grade point ratio will be scored as $GPR * 1.25$.

Example 1 - a student with a GPR of 4.0, is scored $4.0 * 1.25 = 5.000$.

Example 2 - a student with a GPR of 3.5, is scored $3.5 * 1.25 = 4.375$.

Grade point ratio is computed for all coursework including courses outside of the department (cumulative GPR). It is not limited to degree plan courses.

SOCI 685 Directed Studies courses *are not included* when computing grade point ratios.

Grades are obtained by department staff from official university records. Recent grade changes must be documented to be considered.

Incompletes must be resolved within one semester. Incompletes that have not been resolved convert to F and *are* included in the calculations. They carry a grade point of 0 and thus impose a significant penalty on GPR.

Teaching Assistant / Research Assistant Evaluation. Applicants will be scored on assistantship performance based on the Teaching Assistant / Research Assistant Evaluation Form (i.e., Appendix 2) that is filled out by the faculty member supervising the graduate student holding the Assistantship.

The mean score of the responses from Appendix 2 will be the teaching/research assistantship score. Graduate students are responsible to provide the faculty members that supervised their assistantship with the evaluation forms two or more weeks in advance of the deadline for submitting them to the Department.

For teaching assistants with full course responsibility, the evaluation is based on the standard student evaluation. However, these teaching assistants would be in disadvantage, compared to teaching assistants aiding faculty. Undergraduate students evaluate teaching assistants with full course responsibility, while faculty members evaluate teaching assistants working with them.

As a way to deal with this disparity, the committee should calculate departmental averages of student evaluations by semester and course level (100-level, 200-level, 300-level, 400-level). If the teaching assistant with full course responsibility received an evaluation above the departmental average for the respective course level, the graduate student is assigned a score of 5.0. If the evaluation is below the departmental average (within one standard deviation from the departmental average), the graduate student is assigned a score of 4.0. If the evaluation is below the departmental average (further than one standard deviation from

the departmental average), the graduate student is assigned a score of 3.0 or the original score (whichever is higher).

Professional Activity. Applicants will be scored on professional activity based on the following:

5. Very high activity
4. High activity
3. Average activity
2. Low activity
1. Little or no activity

4. After scores on individual items are obtained for each student, a weighted sum of the item scores will be computed as follows.

Students who *are holding* a departmental assistantship.

- 50% Progress in the Program
- 20% Grade Point Ratio
- 20% Assistantship Evaluations
- 10% Professional Activity

Students who *are not holding* a departmental assistantship.

- 60% Progress in the Program
- 25% Grade Point Ratio
- 15% Professional Activity

Graduate students at early stages of the graduate program are not evaluated on the professional activity criteria because they are expected to focus on obtaining sociological knowledge through their academic work (e.g., courses, writing a thesis) to prepare them to teach and conduct research.

When profession activity does not apply, students *with* an assistantship will be evaluated based on:

- 60% Progress in the program
- 20% Grade Point Ratio
- 20% Assistantship evaluation

When profession activity does not apply, students *without* an assistantship will be evaluated based on:

- 70% Progress in the program
- 30% Grade Point Ratio

Examples of Scoring

Student A with GPR 4.0 (scored $4.0 \times 1.25 = 5.000$) and other scores. This student is a doctoral student who held an assistantship. They are evaluated on all four items.

	Item Score	Item Weight	Contribution
Progress in the Program	5.000	50%	2.500
Grade Point Ratio	5.000	20%	1.000
Assistantship Evaluations	4.000	20%	0.800
Professional Activity	4.000	10%	0.400
Score based on Sum			4.700

Student B with GPR 3.7 (scored $3.7 \times 1.25 = 4.625$) and other scores. This student is a doctoral student who did not hold an assistantship in the previous year.

	Item Score	Item Weight	Contribution
Progress in the Program	4.000	60%	2.400
Grade Point Ratio	4.625	25%	1.156
Assistantship Evaluations	*	*	*
Professional Activity	4.000	15%	0.600
Score based on Sum			4.156

Student C with GPR 3.4 (scored $3.4 \times 1.25 = 4.250$) and other scores. This student is a master's student and is not evaluated on professional activity.

	Item Score	Item Weight	Contribution
Progress in the Program	4.000	60%	2.400
Grade Point Ratio	4.250	20%	0.850
Assistantship Evaluations	4.000	20%	0.800
Professional Activity	*	*	*
Score based on Sum			4.0500

Student D with GPR 3.8 (scored $3.8 \times 1.25 = 4.750$) and other scores. This student did not hold an assistantship in the previous year. This student is a master's student and is not evaluated on professional activity.

	Item Score	Item Weight	Contribution
Progress in the Program	3.000	70%	2.100
Grade Point Ratio	4.250	30%	1.275
Assistantship Evaluations	*	*	*
Professional Activity	*	*	*
Score based on Sum			3.375

5. Reporting Guidelines. Graduate students are responsible for ensuring that the Graduate Program Committee receives the following.

- a. An updated and accurate copy of Appendix 1: Information Sheet: Graduate Students' Progress in the Program.
- b. Documentation on accomplishment with regard to professional activity.
- c. When appropriate (i.e., for graduate who held an assistantship and were assigned to a faculty member), a Teaching Assistant / Research Assistant Evaluation Form (i.e., Appendix 2) from each faculty member they assisted.
- d. When appropriate (i.e., for graduate students who taught a course): (1) teaching evaluations, and (2) average grade assigned to the students in the class(es) taught.

In addition, graduate students may include a statement describing their progress in the program, professional activities, and, when appropriate, GTA responsibilities.

6. Continuing students will be ranked based on the weighted sums of item scores. Assistantships will be offered to the highest ranked student. This process will continue until all available assistantships are assigned and accepted.

7. In the event of ties in the ranking, preference should be given to students who have the fewest years of departmental support. Otherwise, the committee will make a good faith attempt to differentiate fairly between the tied students.

8. Exceptions to the allocation process outlined here can be made to accommodate important departmental needs (e.g., specific departmental teaching needs, departmental needs to provide assistants to research projects to fulfill "matching" obligations, etc.).

Appendix 1: Information Sheet: Graduate Students' Progress in the Program

Semester and year of admission to the graduate program _____

_____ Entered the graduate program with a B.A or B.S

_____ Entered the graduate program with a M.A or M.S.

Master's Degree Required Coursework 32 Hours

Enter N/A if you entered the graduate program with a M.A. or M.S. and have been formally exempted from taking a required course. Note: formal exemption requires a memo signed by the Graduate Advisor and Department Head.

Completion of required theory courses (N/A if exempt).

_____ 611 Classical Sociological Theory Semester Completed _____

_____ 615 Contemporary Sociological Theory Semester Completed _____

Completion of required methods courses (623, 631, and either 624 *or* 604; N/A if exempt).

_____ 623 Measurement of Sociological Parameters Semester Completed _____

_____ 631 Seminar in Sociological Research (Quantitative) Semester Completed _____

_____ 624 Qualitative Methodology Semester Completed _____

OR

_____ 604 Comparative Historical Methods Semester Completed _____

Completion of required professional development courses (691, 680, 681)

_____ 691 Master's Paper Class Semester Completed _____

_____ 680 Teaching Undergraduate Sociology Semester Completed _____

_____ 681 Professional Seminar in Sociology Semester Completed _____

Master's Electives (two courses, six hours)

_____ Elective One Semester Completed _____

_____ Elective Two Semester Completed _____

Research Hours (5 hours in addition to Master's Paper Class)

_____ Research Hours Semester Completed _____

Other M.S. Requirements; Name of M.S. Committee Chair _____

_____ M.S. degree plan approved Semester Completed _____

_____ M.S. thesis completed Semester Completed _____

Ph.D. Required Coursework

64 Hours (in addition to the Master's Coursework)

Courses in Major Area of Doctoral Study (12 hours); Name of Major Area is: _____

_____ Semester Completed _____
_____ Semester Completed _____
_____ Semester Completed _____
_____ Semester Completed _____

Courses in Minor Area of Doctoral Study (9 hours); Name of Minor Area is: _____

_____ Semester Completed _____
_____ Semester Completed _____
_____ Semester Completed _____

Professional Development Sociology Publishing Course (e.g., 683) (3 hours)

_____ Semester Completed _____

40 hours of Electives and/or Research Hours (691) (**Must** include 18 hours of 691 doctoral research hours)

Semester Completed _____

Electives: _____

Research Hours: _____

Other Doctoral Requirements; Name of Ph.D. Committee Chair:

_____ Ph.D. Degree Plan Approved Semester Completed _____
_____ Completion of Comprehensive exams Semester Completed _____
_____ Completion of Dissertation Proposal Semester Completed _____
_____ Completion of Dissertation Semester Completed _____

Appendix 2: Teaching Assistant / Research Assistant Evaluation Form

Section to be filled out by student applicant.

Name of Assistant: _____

Name of Professor: _____

Course/Project: _____ Semester/Year: _____

Section to be filled out by Professor for whom student served as TA/RA.

Please answer the following questions regarding the student's performance as a teaching or research assistant in relationship to standards that are consistent with that of a responsible future faculty member or professional sociologist.

First, please write short answers to the following questions (as stated in Graduate Student Handbook, page 11) on this page and, second, the quantitative questions on the second page:

a) Describe the task or tasks which the assistant to asked to perform.

b) Provide a statement of the assistant's strengths and weaknesses in performing each task.

c) Please add any additional comments you believe are relevant to a fair evaluation of the applicant. This might include more specific information about accomplishments or extenuating circumstances relevant to less than expected performance.

Please continue on the next page.

1. Did he/she carry out the duties assigned to them?

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Above Average
- 3 Average
- 2 Below Average
- 1 Poor

2. Did the student finish assignments in a timely manner?

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Above Average
- 3 Average
- 2 Below Average
- 1 Poor

3. Did the quality of the student's work live up to your expectations?

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Above Average
- 3 Average
- 2 Below Average
- 1 Poor

4. Was the student asked to make original contributions of their own?

- 1 Yes ... Continue to question 5
- 2 No ... Skip to question 6

5. Did the student make original contributions of their own? (Answer **ONLY IF** you responded 'Yes' on Question 4)

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Above Average
- 3 Average
- 2 Below Average
- 1 Poor

6. Did the student meet with you on a regular basis as expected and keep appointments with others (e.g., students or project members)?

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Above Average
- 3 Average
- 2 Below Average
- 1 Poor

Checklist of Materials to Include with Your Application

1. Assistantship Application Form.
2. Student Information Sheet (Appendix 1).
3. Assistantship Evaluation Forms (Appendix 2). Where appropriate the form should be provided to the relevant faculty members. Note the faculty members you have asked to submit evaluation forms.
4. Documentation of Professional Activities. This may be an updated CV, or a statement, or both.
5. Documentation of recent grade changes or resolutions of incompletes (these may not be reflected in official records).
6. A statement providing information regarding unusual circumstances that have impeded progress in the program (e.g., serious illness requiring temporary withdrawal from the university). Please note that financial need is not considered in assistantship evaluations and thus statements speaking to this cannot be taken into account.