

# Graduate Handbook

# Fall 2020

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Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
West Virginia University  
(updated 01/25/2020)

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## **1. ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology at WVU offers a Master of Arts and a Ph.D. in sociology. All students entering the program will be enrolled as doctoral students. Students entering the program with a BA/BS will be dually enrolled in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs until they complete the M.A. requirements. The program emphasizes foundational coursework in sociology, including theory, methods and statistics, as well as courses and independent research in an area related to the department's specializations in crime, community and culture.

The doctoral program explores connections across crime, community, and culture. In addition to being trained in mixed methods—quantitative and qualitative, students are expected to take a third methods course. The Ph.D. program is designed for students who are interested in working as professional sociologists in teaching and research.

The department is strongly committed to teaching, mentoring, and collaborative research with students. Members of the faculty have received major research grants, won national teaching and research awards, published several books and numerous academic articles, and served as the editor or editorial board members of prestigious journals. In many cases, students have worked as research collaborators with faculty and co-authored publications.

### **1.1 Mission Statement**

The Sociology Ph.D. program trains students in the fundamental skills of sociology. Graduates of the program are prepared for teaching and research positions at the academic or professional level. Students acquire advanced knowledge of sociological theory and research in one of the three offered areas of specialization:

- Crime: Social Control and Violence
- Community: Health, Environment and Place
- Culture: Social Psychology, Religion and Organizations

### **1.2 Program Objectives**

The objective of the PhD program in Sociology is to train students to work as professional sociologists in academia, government positions, community agencies, and private industry. We strive to provide students with the skills they need to be successful in their careers. Students who graduate from our program will be able to use sociological theory to evaluate the social world. Students will have the methodological skills needed to develop a research program and assess social issues. Students will be able to critically analyze the canonical literature in one of the three specialty areas offered through the program – crime, community, or culture. Students will be able to explain professional practice and ethics as they relate to sociology and will be familiar with the current state of knowledge, research, and needs of sociology as a discipline.

#### **1.2.1 Learning Outcomes**

Students graduating with a MA in Sociology will be able to:

- Proficiently communicate concepts within the field of sociology orally and in writing
- Apply research skills to analyze and/or explore the student's subject area
- Explain the role of research in addressing questions, issues, and problems pertaining to social issues

- Produce original research to evaluate social issues using sociological theories and methodological skills
- Explain professional practice and ethics as they relate to sociology
- Critically analyze and evaluate the literature in the student's subject area

Students graduating with a Ph.D. in Sociology will be able to:

- Effectively communicate, orally and in writing, the current state of knowledge, research, and needs in the field of sociology
- Conduct independent and original research of publishable quality
- Develop a research program to evaluate social issues using sociological theories and methodological skills
- Critically analyze the canonical literature in one of the three specialty areas (crime, community, or culture)
- Explain professional practice and ethics as they relate to sociology

## **2. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES**

### **2.1 Applying for admission**

Required application materials:

- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities previously attended.
- Statement of purpose describing reasons for enrolling in the program. In particular, statements should address the following points: 1) description of your fields of interest, 2) research questions you hope to pursue and how these fit with faculty interests and expertise, and 3) the importance of doctoral study, research, teaching, and community engagement to your future career goals.
- Short sample of your academic writing.
- Curriculum Vitae highlighting your accomplishments in research, teaching and/or service. It should identify any research experience, publications, presentations, teaching experience, service activities, and awards/honors received.
- Three letters of recommendation from people who have direct knowledge of your academic performance, potential for graduate study, and can attest to your academic promise, maturity and commitment to scholarship.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. The GRE should be taken within two years of the application submission.
- International students for who English is not the native language are required by the University to submit the Test of English As a Foreign Language (TOEFL). WVU accepts either the TOEFL or the IELTS for this purpose. Please see [English Language Proficiency Requirements](#) for more information.
- Identify a [faculty](#) member (or faculty members) whose research interests you

Applications also include a non-refundable application fee. The GRE is required for all applicants. For any applicant facing special circumstances where taking the GRE presents a hardship, the GPC will evaluate alternatives for that applicant.

The application process is online. Applicants must submit a University Graduate Application at: <https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply>.

## **2.2 Deadlines for graduate applications**

The application deadline is February 1<sup>st</sup>. Most materials will need to be received by January 15<sup>th</sup> to be uploaded for evaluation by the February 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Initial offers to students will occur on March 15. We do not accept students at mid-year.

## **2.3 Regular graduate admission**

Regular graduate students are degree-seeking students who meet all the criteria for regular admission to a program of their choice. The student must have earned a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, must have had a grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale, and must be under no requirements to make up deficiencies.

## **2.4 Provisional graduate admission**

A student may be admitted as a provisional graduate student when the student has earned a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, but does not meet the criteria for regular admission. The student may have incomplete credentials, deficiencies to make up, or an undergraduate scholastic record that shows promise but is below the 3.0 grade point average required for regular admission. In the case of provisional admission, the letter of admission from the graduate program will specify the requirements that must be met for the graduate student to be re-classified as a regular graduate student.

## **2.5 Residency requirements**

### **2.5.1 Residency as part of the doctoral degree requirements**

Doctoral education involves many learning experiences that take place outside the formal classroom setting. These involve observing and participating in activities conducted by the graduate faculty, using departmental and University libraries, attending lectures presented by visiting scholars, informally debating other students, and similar activities. To insure that graduate students experience this kind of informal learning, doctoral programs at WVU require at least two semesters in residence on campus.

### **2.5.2 Residency classification**

The residency policy is established by the WV Higher Education Policy Commission Series 25, which is posted at [admissions.wvu.edu/admissions/residency/hep-25](http://admissions.wvu.edu/admissions/residency/hep-25). The WVU Office of Admissions assigns students a residency classification for admission, tuition, and fee purposes. Students who are legal residents of West Virginia pay “resident” tuition and fees at WVU; students who are residents of other states and nations pay “non-resident” tuition and fees. Further information on residency classification is at [admissions.wvu.edu/admissions/residency](http://admissions.wvu.edu/admissions/residency).

## **3. TIME LIMITS**

Doctoral students are allowed a maximum of ten calendar years from admission to the doctoral program to complete all requirements of the PhD degree. In order to maintain funding students are expected to be admitted to candidacy by the end of the tenth semester of enrollment (for those entering without a master’s degree) or by the end of the eighth semester of enrollment (for those entering with a master’s degree). Students become doctoral candidates once they have successfully passed their dissertation prospectus. Doctoral candidates are allowed no more than five years in which to complete the remaining requirements of their program after being admitted to doctoral candidacy.

All requirements for the master's degree must be completed within five calendar years, beginning with the date the student commences courses carrying graduate credit applicable to the degree program. In order for students to maintain funding they are expected to complete all requirements for the master's degree before the end of the fourth semester of enrollment.

## **4 GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Current students should refer to the [SOCA website](#) for updated forms, links, and other information including a timeline for the thesis, dissertation, and comprehensive exams.

### **4.1 Required courses**

All students are required to take the seven courses in the graduate program's core curriculum. The core courses are designed to provide students with a foundational knowledge in sociology. No student will be granted a graduate degree without having a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher in these courses. The required courses include:

SOCA 600 – Professional Development Pro-seminar	1 credit
SOCA 601 – Research and Writing Pro-seminar	1 credit
SOCA 610 – Advanced General Sociology	3 credits
SOCA 615 – Sociological Data Analysis & Interpretation I	3 credits
SOCA 616 – Sociological Data Analysis & Interpretation II	3 credits
SOCA 620 – Sociological Research Methods	3 credits
SOCA 730 – Sociological Explanation	3 credits

Additional required core courses for the doctoral program:

SOCA 721 – Qualitative Methods	3 credits
SOCA 740/760/780 – Area of Specialization	3 credits

#### **4.1.1 Students entering the program with a BA/BS or non-thesis MA**

Students who enter the graduate program with a BA/BS degree or a non-thesis M.A. degree are required to complete the M.A. degree as part of their progress toward the Ph.D. Students will receive the M.A. degree in sociology upon completing the seven required core courses, three elective courses, six thesis credit hours (32 hours), and the completion of a master's thesis. The elective courses can include the area required course and/or a methods III course. The six thesis credits must be split over at least two semesters. Students will be dually enrolled in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs until they complete the M.A. requirements. Students must be enrolled in at least one credit hour during the semester of graduation.

Students who continue in the program to complete the Ph.D. have the following requirements in addition to the core required courses:

- Doctoral level required core courses (SOCA 721)
- Area of specialization course
- Fifteen hours total of elective course credits
- Nine hours of dissertation credits

Doctoral students must take an area of specialization required course. Students can take a third methods course to meet elective requirements. The methods course can be GEOG 550. Other outside courses must be approved by the GPC. The elective courses can include a second area required course and/or a fourth methods course. Doctoral students must also pass comprehensive examinations and successfully defend a dissertation. Teaching Sociology (SOCA 710) is required for students funded on a GTA line. The doctoral program requires students to complete 47-56 credit hours.

#### **4.1.2 Students entering the program with a MA degree (with thesis)**

Students are accepted into the doctoral program upon their entry into the department. Students do not need to complete the M.A. thesis provided they have completed a thesis requirement at their previous institution, and the thesis meets the standards of the graduate committee. (see Section 11.1)

Doctoral students are required to take the nine required core courses, an area of specialization required elective, five elective courses, and nine hours of dissertation credits. Students can take a third methods course to meet elective requirements. The methods course can be GEOG 550. Other outside courses must be approved by the GPC. Doctoral students must also pass comprehensive examinations and successfully defend a dissertation. Teaching Sociology (SOCA 710) is required for students funded on a GTA line. The doctoral program requires students to complete 50-59 credit hours.

#### **4.2 Areas of Specialization**

Doctoral students will take six courses across the department's three areas of specialization: Crime, Community and Culture. A description of each area follows.

##### *Crime -- Social Control and Violence*

The study of crime, social control, and violence has become arguably the fastest growing subfield within sociology. At its heart, the study of social control and violence speaks to what it means to have society and community, as many of our most basic human relations are shaped by notions of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable. Sociology faculty within the crime subfield at West Virginia University bring a great diversity of theoretical orientations and methodological innovations to the study of social control and violence. Current faculty research includes studies of domestic violence, self-defense, crime and inequality, corrections institutions, substance abuse treatment programs, hate crimes, neighborhood inequalities, victimization, fear of crime, suicide, violent conflict among inmates, police reconstruction, neighborhood dynamics, and state control.

The objective of this area of specialization is to not only leave students with a broad understanding of influential classics and cutting-edge research in the field of sociological criminology, but also to stimulate student thought about the intersection of science, public policy, and social action, with an emphasis on producing high-quality scientific research that is able to impact important public debates on crime and justice. The required elective in the crime area is SOCA 740 – Sociological Theories of Crime and Deviance.



### *Community -- Health, Environment and Place*

Studies of community have been the core of sociology from the beginning of the discipline. Sociology faculty in Community at West Virginia University bring this tradition into the modern era by using innovative research methods and theories to study important sociological problems in urban, rural, and suburban places. Current faculty research includes studies of the causes and consequences of neighborhood change, community crime, disorder and social control, rural and urban culture, college community problems, the effects of welfare reform in economically disadvantaged communities, access to affordable housing, factors that affect population family and health outcomes within communities, environmental injustice, racial and ethnic groups in cities, and residents perceptions of neighborhood quality of life. Graduate student training will reflect these diverse faculty interests.

The area of community is broadly construed and considers the structure and function of communities within the larger society. Within this area, our doctoral program specifically focuses on health, the environment and place. We are examining communities as a context within which individuals are influenced. The objectives of this specialization are to develop knowledge in community sociology drawing on theories of urban and rural sociology, as well as spatial analyses of place (e.g., ecology and spatial demography). Students who study community sociology will be well-versed in theories and research methods associated with contextual patterns. Key methods on contextual analyses—both qualitative and quantitative—are also important components of this area. The required elective in the community area is SOCA 760 – Space, Place, and Community.

### *Culture -- Social Psychology, Religion and Organizations*

The specialization in culture includes four overlapping areas of inquiry: culture, social psychology, religion, and organizations. The first area, culture, involves the study of culture as a set of shared taken-for-granted assumptions that are reflected in or shape norms, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. Faculty have studied a wide range of cultures including campus, regional, religious, rural, national, and organizational. The second area focuses on theories and research in social psychology. It emphasizes both individual and group processes (e.g., cognition, emotion, perception, attitude formation) and interactive processes (e.g., communication, socialization, identity construction) from a sociological perspective. The third area aims to understand how religion shapes and is shaped by individuals, communities, and culture. The fourth area investigates organizational and group dynamics, such as equity, commitment, retention, change, and solidarity, and how organizational and group structures affect and are affected by beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Current faculty research includes studies of sports, the Amish, the criminal justice system, work, group processes, gender, civic engagement, religion, science, media, constructing social problems and higher education. Faculty use a diverse range of methods to explore these areas, including interviews, experiments, multilevel models, ethnography, social network analysis, archival, and surveys.

The objective of this specialization and what unites these four areas of inquiry is for students to develop knowledge of theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding micro-macro linkages by drawing on social psychological, organizational, and cultural theories. The required elective in the culture area is SOCA 780 – Individual and Society.

## **4.3 Special Courses**

Special Course Request Procedure is as follows. Special courses include any class that must be added to the schedule after the schedule is set. Typically, these are sections for single students to work with a faculty member in a focused and special regard. Special courses do not count toward elective requirements.

For graduate special courses (e.g., research hours, independent studies and teaching practicums but not thesis or dissertation hours), the draft syllabus should be sent to the DGS and copied to the Department Chair for their review and approval. Once the syllabus is fine-tuned and approved (if changes are requested), the DGS will let the SLI Coordinator know to add the class to the schedule, without requiring restrictions. Completed contracts must be placed on file.

#### **4.4 Transfer Credits Policy**

Students who wish to transfer credits to the doctoral program must meet several requirements. First, students must be or have been enrolled in a sociology program in a PhD granting institution. This stipulation excludes programs with a terminal MA degree and any programs that are not sociology (i.e. applied sociology, criminology, criminal justice, social science).

Second, students must submit an appeal to the Graduate Program Committee (GPC) for any required coursework to be transferred. The GPC will consider transfer credits for core courses including methods, statistics, and theory. All students who transfer into the program are expected to take SOCA 600 (Professional Development Pro-seminar), SOCA 601 (Research and Writing Pro-seminar), the six elective courses. The appeal will include: syllabi for the courses in question and copy of the transcript indicating the student earned an “A” in the courses in question. Students are encouraged to include additional materials such as essays, papers, statistics homework, or exams to aid in the evaluation of their courses. The GPC will review the appeal file. The GPC retains the right to request the student to take a comprehensive essay exam as part of the appeals process. The essay exam will include questions focused on mastery of statistics and theory.

Students may transfer up to 18 credit hours if approved by the GPC. Courses considered for transfer must have been completed within five years of the application submission.

All students enrolled in the doctoral program are expected to take comprehensive exams and defend their dissertation proposal at WVU.

#### **4.5 Comprehensive exams**

The comprehensive exams are intended to assess students’ broad competencies in a specialized area of sociology with specific focus on understanding sociological theory and methods as they relate to the student’s chosen specialization. The comprehensive exams provide students an opportunity to demonstrate their sociological knowledge, their ability to carry out independent research, and their writing skills, including the ability to organize, synthesize, and critique sociological scholarship.

Comprehensive exams should take place in the last semester of coursework or the first semester following the completion of coursework. It is not ideal for students to take comprehensive exams if they are enrolled in a full load of courses (9 credit hours). Students might complete comprehensive exams and a dissertation proposal defense in the same semester, provided they

complete the comprehensive exam process by mid-semester. Students must successfully pass comprehensive exams before defending their dissertation proposal.

#### **4.5.1 Preparing for exams**

Students begin the exam preparation process by planning a meeting with their committee chair to discuss, define, and decide on an area of specialization. Developing a comprehensive exam is the responsibility of the student and his or her chair and advisory committee, but the end product should follow two departmental requirements.

First, the area of specialization should fall within one of the department's three concentrations – crime, community or culture – even though it is understood that these concentrations contain a number of large and growing subfields that may be more appropriate for some students. The comprehensive exam should be the nexus for 1) foundational works in sociology and/or specific subfields of sociology; and 2) frontier works that redirect thinking. The accomplishment of this goal is the responsibility of individual students and committee members; acknowledging the chosen area should not be too broad (e.g., inequality) or too narrow (e.g., sociology of pigeon racing in nineteenth-century London). The American Sociological Association includes more than fifty sections; consulting these sections may help students define their specializations. See section 4.6.1a for additional guidelines that might be used to define an area of specialization.

The second department requirement is that a comprehensive exam should evaluate a student's knowledge of both theory and methods in a specialization area, methods the student plans to use in their dissertation (i.e. the reading list should include pure methods readings), as well as test the student's canonical understanding of the related literature. To this end, all comprehensive exams should consist of four questions: one focused on theory, one on methods, and two on the nature of the specialization itself that will allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the area.

##### *4.5.1a Comprehensive Exam Models*

The Triangle Model begins with an exploration of master works in a student's area of concentration (e.g., criminology or sociology of religion). This exploration is followed by specification and exploration of a subarea within the broader area, one that has a discrete topical or empirical orientation (e.g., victimization or religion and civic engagement/political activism). Finally, a particular well-developed locus of concern (e.g., elder victimization or congregational contexts and civic engagement) is articulated and critiqued. The dissertation is anticipated to focus on the locus of concern.

The Venn Model begins with three analytically discrete areas that intersect and overlap. Within each area, a student must define and show an understanding of key texts, explain how and why certain areas of concern in these texts matter, and locate these moments in particular exchanges or empirical issues. Often the central components within each area will reflect overlap between areas, and the particular locus of concern will be the place where all three areas overlap. The dissertation is anticipated to be oriented around multiple perspectives on, or synthetic views of, sociological phenomena within the three areas.

In the Venn model, the three areas might be criminology, sociology of religion, and sociology of law. After exploring key historical texts, the criminology area might be narrowed to focus on the subarea of victimization, finishing by examining a locus centered on hate/bias crime and

religion. The same process would be followed in the two remaining areas. Sociology of religion would be narrowed to focus on religious identity and commitment and further refined to a locus centered on religious minorities. Lastly, sociology of law would be narrowed to focus on laws and religion, and further narrowed to religious minorities and religious freedom/regulation. The sociology of religion statement would end with an exploration of how incorporating research on religious minorities generates different concerns than studying religion and hate/bias crime on its own. The sociology of law statement would indicate the alternative loci coming from that perspective and how it contributes a unique perspective.

See Appendix A for additional detail and examples for each of the models.

#### **4.5.2 Exam Requirements**

The comprehensive exam statement consists of three parts: (1) the narrative, (2) the reading list, and (3) draft questions. Comprehensive exam statements (narrative, reading list, and suggested questions) should be developed through a close collaboration between the student and the chair of the advisory committee. The primary purpose of the statement is to clearly define the student's area of specialization and develop mutual expectations about how the student will be tested.

*Narrative:* Students should prepare a narrative that briefly outlines how their research focus fits into each of the areas/subareas and a rationale for the types of literature included on the reading list. The discussion of each area (and relevant subareas) should be limited to 500 words. A diagram is appropriate to include. (Triangle Model or Venn Model, as outlined below.)

After the student's chair approves the student's comprehensive exam narrative the chair distributes the narrative to all members of the advisory committee. Once the student receives approval from the advisory committee, the advisory committee chair submits the student's narrative to the department's graduate committee for final approval. It is expected the student does not move forward in the comprehensive exam process until the narrative has been approved by both the advisory committee and the graduate committee. The narrative should be approved by the advisory committee and the graduate committee at least one semester before students plan to take the comprehensive exam.

*Reading List:* Although there is no specific requirement for the number of academic books and journal articles on the reading list, 100 pieces of literature may serve as a rough guideline.

*Draft questions:* Students will work with their committee to draft suggestions for possible exam questions as part of their exam statement.

The student will submit the exam statement—narrative, reading list, and suggested questions to the advisory committee for approval. The advisory committee may add readings to the list and/or comment on the student's suggested questions.

#### **4.5.3 Written exam procedures**

A student must formally notify the Director of Graduate Studies that they wish to sit for the comprehensive exam by the second week of a given semester. The comprehensive committee declaration form is due to the department program assistant at this stage. If the student plans to sit for the exam at the beginning of a semester, they must notify the DGS by the mid-semester

point of the previous semester. At that time, they should schedule their written exam as well as their oral defense with the department liaison.

A student's approved narrative, reading list, and draft questions serve as guidelines for the advisory committee members to use in finalizing the exam. Generally, students will not be asked exam questions outside of the reading lists. Students should be given at least two questions to choose from for each of the question types. Students will answer one of two theory questions, one of two methods questions and two of three or four mastery of the area of specialization questions.

The advisory committee members will submit questions to the chair of the committee at least six weeks before the scheduled beginning of the examination. The chair of the advisory committee will circulate the complete exam to all members of the committee for review before submitting to the graduate committee. After consensus, the chair will submit the final exam to the graduate committee four weeks in advance of the scheduled exam. The graduate committee has 10 working days to approve the exam questions or submit concerns to the student's committee. The exam needs to be finalized two weeks prior to the exam date.

If the student wishes to take the comprehensive exam at the beginning of the semester, the process outlined above must be initiated in the previous semester. For example, if a student plans to take the exam at the beginning of the fall semester, the process to approve exam questions needs to be completed by the end of the spring semester.

Once a student has requested to sit for the exam and both the advisory committee and the graduate committee have approved the exam questions, they must complete the exam that semester. Failure to take the examination at this point will constitute a failure on all questions of the exam and the student will only have one more opportunity to pass. Exam dates may only be changed under exceptional circumstances.

The chair of the advisory committee is responsible for submitting the final examination to the department liaison. The department liaison is responsible for distributing the exam to the student and collecting answers at the designated times, and then distributing the answers back to the chair of the advisory committee. Students will have a total of six consecutive days to spend writing answers to four questions on the exam.

There is no required page length, but 15-20 double-spaced pages (not including references) for each answer may serve as a rough guideline. Ideally, the narrative, reading list, exam questions/answers will advance students toward their dissertation research. The process of comprehensive exams is designed to help students set up a research program that begins with their dissertation research and will continue through graduation and the beginning of their career.

### ***Grading***

Evaluating the student's answers is the responsibility of the advisory committee. Before taking the exam, students should communicate with their committees about their specific expectations. However, some general evaluation standards exist. Criteria for grading exams may pertain to the following:

- 1) Substance: Is the student knowledgeable and fully informed about the subject of the question? Are the student's contrasts and comparisons about the literature accurate? Did the student successfully synthesize or integrate different areas of the research or different perspectives within it? Does the student understand the scope of the literature? Did he or she demonstrate an ability to critically analyze empirical studies? Has the student shown that he or she can work alone and carry out independent scholarship?
- 2) Writing quality: Are the student's answers clear and concise, logical and well organized? Is the writing free from redundancy, wordiness and awkward phrases? Is the work stylistically elegant and persuasive?
- 3) Creativity: Is the student's work original and interesting? Do the answers convincingly direct us toward new thinking about an issue? Did the student identify an interesting problem in the literature or a special need for research?

Each exam question will receive one of three grades:

- 1) Pass with distinction: the answer is exceptional, engaging and unique.
- 2) Pass: the answer is satisfactory and requires no further work.
- 3) Fail: the answer is deficient and must be redone. Students may fail part or all of the exam. In the case of a failing grade, the chair of the student's advisory committee must give directions for retaking part or the entire exam. Students must retake the exam within one academic year. If a student must retake part of the exam, they will have two days to work on each of the questions that demand a retake. They may only retake the exam once, after which termination procedures begin.

All members of the committee must play a role in the grading process. Each committee member must read the answers and write an evaluation of each of them. If a majority of the members vote to pass an answer, it is automatically considered a pass. However, in the case of a difference of opinions, the committee members should meet, discuss their views, and attempt to reconcile their differences before voting on the given answer. All results and evaluations are reported to the graduate committee.

#### **4.5.4 Oral exam procedures**

The written part of the comprehensive exams will be graded within 10 business days of the regular semester. The written part of the exam provides an assessment of students' ability to effectively engage with a topic in a written medium. The oral exam is considered the second part of the comprehensive exam process. The student may take the oral exam only if they have passed the written part of the exam. The oral defense should be scheduled when the written examination is scheduled. The defense is open to all faculty and students in the department.

The oral exam is intended to assess a students' ability to talk about their research and defend their answers on the written part of the exam. Students should be able to engage in a thoughtful discussion about the relevant literature. The questions asked by advisory committee members in the oral defense should be specific to the exam. Students should work with their chairs and committees to prepare for the oral defense. In most cases, the student will be asked to give a brief

summary of their written comprehensive exam work, but the primary emphasis is on a question and answer session.

### ***Grading***

Evaluating the oral exam is the responsibility of the advisory committee. Before taking the exam, students should communicate with their committees about their specific expectations. However, some general evaluation standards exist. Criteria for grading oral exams may pertain to the following:

- 1) Substance: Is the student knowledgeable and fully informed about the subject of the question? Are the student's contrasts and comparisons about the literature accurate? Did the student successfully synthesize or integrate different areas of the research or different perspectives within it? Does the student understand the scope of the literature? Did he or she demonstrate an ability to critically analyze empirical studies?
- 2) Discussion: Is the student able to engage in thoughtful discussion about the relevant literature? Can the student defend their answers on the written part of the exam?

The oral exam will receive one overall grade:

- 1) Pass: the answers are satisfactory and require no further work.
- 2) Fail: the answers are deficient and must be redone. In the case of a failing grade, the chair of the student's advisory committee must give directions for retaking the exam. Students must retake the exam within one academic year. They may only retake the exam once, after which termination procedures begin.

All members of the committee must play a role in the grading process. Each committee member must provide feedback to the chair of the advisory committee. The chair will fill out the oral exam form, providing a brief explanation of the students' grade. If a majority of the members vote to pass the oral exam, it is automatically considered a pass. However, in the case of a difference of opinions, the committee members should meet, discuss their views, and attempt to reconcile their differences before voting on the given answer. The oral exam form is submitted to the graduate committee.

#### **4.5.5 Comprehensive Examination Grade Appeal Procedure**

An appeal is appropriate only when the awarding of a grade to the student may have involved a denial of due process through prejudice or capriciousness. Appeals will not be considered to resolve disputes about the student's knowledge of the subject matter. In all cases, appeals should be made in writing.

The student should meet with the doctoral advisory committee to discuss the grievance in detail. Both the committee and the student are obligated to try to resolve their differences. If after one or more meetings the student is still unsatisfied, he/she may appeal to the Graduate Program Committee. If the student wishes to appeal the GPC decision, the process moves to the University level. The [University process](#) indicates the appeal must be taken to the Department Chair within 10 class days after the penalty is communicated to the student. As such, the initial

meetings with the doctoral advisory committee and GPC need to take place inside the 10 day window.

#### **4.6 Thesis and Dissertation**

Upon completion of coursework and the comprehensive exam, students will defend a dissertation proposal. Before the dissertation proposal can be defended, students must have completed any courses for which they received a grade of “Incomplete.”

Throughout the first two semesters of the M.A. program and the first four semesters of the doctoral program, students should be actively considering potential topics for a research project. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss their interests with several faculty members to help clarify their ideas and research objectives. Selecting and clarifying a research topic early on will help the student focus their coursework and other program activities on a “doable” research project, as well as assemble an appropriate faculty committee. The research topic is always decided by the student, but close research collaborations between students and faculty are encouraged, as they often result in research publications and timely graduation.

Another key step in selecting a research topic is to consider the availability of data. Students may wish to focus their research on a topic that can be addressed through the use of *secondary* data. Students may also consider collecting *primary* data, but should remain aware of time limitations. If human research subjects are to be used in primary data collection, students will need to apply for approval through WVU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning their data collection. IRB approval is needed for secondary data analysis only when identifiers, such as subjects’ names or addresses, are included in the dataset. In all other cases, secondary data analysis does not require IRB approval. Students should consult their committee chair about this matter, and learn more about the IRB process online at:

[http://oric.research.wvu.edu/human\\_subjects\\_research\\_and\\_the\\_irb](http://oric.research.wvu.edu/human_subjects_research_and_the_irb).

##### **4.6.1 Prospectus**

The thesis and dissertation models allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the program’s key learning objectives. With these common aims in mind, all prospectus should include (though to varying degrees) the following elements:

- A statement of the research problem and why it’s important. What is it you seek to learn, by whom will the findings be valued, and why? Empirical research is addressed to a particular set of scholars, professionals or citizens. Besides the members of your thesis or dissertation committee, who is your intended audience? What is the sociological relevance of your research idea?
- Citation of relevant literature. Drawing on your training in the program, you must show your ability to integrate empirical literature to form a cohesive argument. Whether you are preparing a theory-driven journal article that tests hypotheses or a traditional length dissertation, you must demonstrate that you know how to search for, find, and properly use related empirical studies. Using the literature “properly” requires a clear understanding of the purpose of your research and its intended audience. Demonstrating your preliminary knowledge of the literature and outlining a clear plan for using it represent a key step in developing a thesis proposal.



- Discussion of methods, data and measurement. What kind of study design is being proposed (survey, experiment, quasi-experiment, interviews, field research, content analysis)? How did you choose your proposed method? Why is your method appropriate for producing the kind of evidence your problem requires? If it is to be a survey, describe the population, sample design, the length, form and content of the questionnaire to be used. If it is to be a participant observation study, indicate the nature of the site, how often you will visit, over what period of time, and what kinds of things you will do while there. If based on secondary data, explain how and for what purposes the original data were collected, by whom, and in what form they will now be used.
- Plans for analyzing and presenting evidence. Offer a concrete discussion of the specific strategies and techniques for analyzing and presenting the evidence. How will you convert the raw data (e.g., completed questionnaires, field notes, interview transcripts, etc.) into specific findings and how will you present such findings to the reader (e.g., tables, charts, field notes or interview excerpts, etc.)? Will you operationalize your dependent variable by creating an index? Will you use qualitative analytical software to code interviews? What statistics, if any, will be used in your analysis? The content of this material will of course vary widely depending on the given method being proposed. The purpose of this section is for you to visualize your thesis in its completed form, and notify your thesis or dissertation committee what they can expect to see in the final draft.
- A project timeline. All proposals should include a detailed timeline that indicates when the student will complete each phase in the research and writing process.

Students should distribute the thesis/dissertation proposal to members of the advisory committee. The committee will have two weeks to read the proposal and inform the committee chair if the proposal is defensible. If the proposal is defensible, the student should work with the chair to schedule a defense date. If the committee deems the proposal not ready for defense, the student should work with the chair to schedule a meeting with the entire committee to go through the feedback and create a plan to move forward. The student should then make the changes and send the revised proposal to the committee. The committee will have two weeks to read the proposal and inform the committee chair if the proposal is defensible. If the proposal is defensible, the student should work with the chair to schedule a defense date. If the committee deems the proposal not ready for defense, the student should work with the chair to schedule a meeting with the entire committee to go through the feedback and create a plan to move forward. The process continues in this manner.

If the defense is not passed, a repeat of the defense may be scheduled only with approval from the department chair. Once the proposal has been accepted, it must be signed by all committee members and the student. One copy of the proposal is entrusted to the committee chair, one to the student, and one is placed in the student's academic file.

The prospectus constitutes a working agreement binding on both the committee and the student. If the student carries out the research outlined in the proposal, the requirements for the study will

have been fulfilled, regardless of the findings. If the research requires a change in direction, the proposal can be revised by the mutual consent of the student and his or her committee.

The writing and defense of a prospectus is intended to save students from investing in research whose objectives are unclear or that lack the approval of their committee. Final approval might require several drafts of the proposal. However, the graduate committee strongly believes that time spent in conceptualizing and planning the research will save even more time later.

**M.A. Program Requirement.** M.A. students must receive acceptance of their thesis proposal by no later than **November 20 in the third semester** of the M.A. program. Missing the November 20 deadline indicates a failure to make adequate progress in the program and may result in the loss of a student's graduate teaching assistantship or continued admission in the graduate program.

#### **4.6.2 Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines**

**Master's thesis.** The master's thesis should follow the *journal article model* -- a research report intended for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal and presentation at a professional sociology conference. The length of this product varies across journals. As a rough guide, however, 30-50 typed pages, not including references and tables, is a good length for the body of the text. The general format for many journal articles includes a brief introduction outlining the purpose and sociological relevance of the study, a review of literature or a theoretical framework to contextualize research questions or hypotheses, a discussion of the study's design and methods, an analysis of findings, followed by a summary and conclusion. Students are encouraged to identify a specific academic journal (along with exemplar articles within it) that may be appropriate for their research, consult their committee chair about the journal, and follow the selected journal's submission guidelines as they write their thesis.

**Dissertation.** The dissertation requirement ensures that students have the ability to carry out a major independent research project. Students can choose from two dissertation models. They can follow the traditional model, which takes the form and substance of a scholarly monograph, or the manuscript model, which consists of three interrelated papers on a single topic. The quality and contribution of each paper should reach the level of articles published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. The manuscript model must also include an introductory chapter that clarifies the dissertation theme and situates the work as a whole in the sociological literature, as well as a concluding chapter that synthesizes and integrates the three papers.

The student prepares the doctoral dissertation in close consultation with the chair of their dissertation committee. The student, in consultation with the committee chair, should choose a dissertation topic and prepare a research proposal. Copies of the proposal must be made available to all members of the committee and a meeting scheduled for committee input. Students should not continue working on their dissertations without approval from all members of their advisory committees. Students cannot defend their dissertation proposal and their dissertation in the same semester.

#### **4.6.3 Oral Defense**

The oral examination is primarily a defense of the thesis or dissertation. Process: Students should distribute the thesis/dissertation to members of the advisory committee. The committee will have

two weeks to read the proposal and inform the committee chair if the thesis/dissertation is defensible. If the document is defensible, the student should work with the chair to schedule a defense date. If the committee deems the thesis/dissertation not ready for defense, the student should work with the chair to schedule a meeting with the entire committee to go through the feedback and create a plan to move forward. The student should then make the changes and send the revised document to the committee. The committee will have two weeks to read the thesis/dissertation and inform the committee chair if the document is defensible. If the thesis/dissertation is defensible, the student should work with the chair to schedule a defense date. If the committee deems the document not ready for defense, the student should work with the chair to schedule a meeting with the entire committee to go through the feedback and create a plan to move forward. The process continues in this manner.

[University policy](#) stipulates: The student's committee chairperson must obtain approval of the time, place, and committee members for the defense from the college or school dean or designee at least three weeks before the defense date. All dissertation defenses are open to the public and the university community and must be posted on the University calendar by the college or school dean or designee.

The student cannot be considered as having satisfactorily passed their defense if there is more than one unfavorable vote among members of the committee. All committee members, including the chair, are considered equal voting members. Results of each defense must be reported to the college or school dean or designee within two business days. If the defense is not passed, a repeat of the defense may be scheduled only with approval from the college/school dean or designee.

The student and all committee members are expected to be physically present for a defense. In extraordinary circumstances, and only with the approval of the college or school dean or designee, an individual may attend by audio or videoconference (with videoconferencing preferred). Anyone attending the defense electronically must remain available during the entire time of the defense.

#### **4.6.4 Other Research Guidelines**

It is imperative that advisory committee members respond to draft submissions by the student with explicit commentary within roughly one week. The Chair, in consultation with his/her colleagues, indicates when he/she considers a public presentation appropriate.

In order for a completed thesis or dissertation to receive final approval, it must be signed by all members of the committee after a successful, public presentation by the student. Students preparing a thesis or dissertation must refer to requirements detailed in the WVU Graduate Catalog (p. 40): "Theses and dissertations should be presented to the student's graduate advisor or committee chairperson **at least one month** before the end of the enrollment period in which completion of all requirements is expected."

Students preparing a thesis or dissertation must follow the form and general guidelines proscribed under the WVU Graduate School "Regulations Governing the Preparation of Theses," available from the Graduate Records Office, 103 Woodburn Hall (293-2505). The chair of the

student's research committee is to assist the student in applying these general requirements to styles appropriate in the field of sociology.

Students preparing a thesis or dissertation must consult with the Eberly College of Arts & Sciences Graduate Records Office, 103 Woodburn Hall (293-2505) for regulations on deadlines and dates for submission of final copies of the thesis or dissertation. Contact the Library Business Office, Wise Library for any questions regarding Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD).

All WVU Graduate School rules and regulations must be observed. All students are welcome to consult the chairperson of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology about any of the above matters at any time.

#### **4.7 Advancement to Candidacy**

Students will fill out the [advancement to candidacy form](#) when they defend their dissertation proposal. The form indicates the formal point at which the committee is considered “established,” after which any changes to committee structure must have college approval. The form will also facilitate college reporting of candidacy semesters to the registrar. More information about the candidacy form can be found [here](#).

### **5 ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Students are in charge of selecting and managing the composition of their advisory committees. Students may request a temporary advisor prior to their first semester in the program. By the end of the second semester, M.A. students should have identified a faculty member willing to serve as the chair of their advisory committee. Doctoral students should identify a chair by the end of the fourth semester. The chair must be a member of the graduate faculty who is appropriately qualified and authorized by the Graduate School to advise graduate students. The chair should always be the first point of contact for the student on matters of degree requirements, funding, protocols and matters of professional behavior.

In consultation with the chair, students must secure the willingness of additional graduate faculty to serve on the advisory committee. Early selection of an advisory committee can provide the student with guidance especially suited to her/his interests and assures that an appropriate plan of study is developed and followed. The advisory committee is expected to be available for student program planning, discussion of professional development, and consultation and direction on thesis and dissertation research, as well as comprehensive exams. Committee members are expected to be well acquainted with the student's progress at all times after the committee's formation. A student should be certain to keep the committee members fully informed of progress toward the degree.

The majority of the members of any advisory committee must be *regular* members of the graduate faculty, including the chair of the committee. No more than one person may be a nonmember of the graduate faculty. An outside faculty member cannot serve as chair of a committee. No family member may serve on the committee of his or her relative. All advisory

committees are subject to the approval of the chairperson or designee of the department/division and the dean or designee of the college or school.

Once an advisory committee has been officially established, it will not be necessary to alter it if the graduate faculty status of a member of the committee is downgraded. Though rare, substitution of committee members or the chair may occur at the request of either the student or faculty. Any changes in the membership of a committee require approval of the department chair. Depending on circumstances and the judgment of the department chair, replacement of the chair of an advisory committee may require that activities already completed (such as a prospectus approval meeting) be repeated.

### **5.1 Master's Thesis Committees**

Master's thesis committees consist of no fewer than three members. One member of the committee may be from outside the student's department.

### **5.2 Doctoral Advisory Committees**

Doctoral advisory committees must consist of no fewer than four members. At least one member of the committee must be from a department other than the one in which the student is seeking a degree (external member). Qualified individuals from outside WVU are allowable, as long as the general requirements for committee membership are followed.

The majority of the members of the thesis or dissertation committee must be regular members of the graduate faculty, including the chair of the committee. Regular members of the graduate faculty will generally be internal members of the committee—housed within the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Adjunct faculty members who are members of the regular graduate faculty (e.g. hold an appointment at WVU in a tenure track position) can also serve as internal members on graduate committees. Adjunct faculty who are already on campus are regular graduate faculty if they are considered as such through their primary appointment. (Adjunct faculty are associate members if associate via their primary appointment.) An adjunct faculty member might be considered for internal committee membership if a student's area is underrepresented by faculty members in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Any faculty member can make a recommendation for an adjunct position. The adjunct must meet the standards for a regular member of the graduate faculty and fill a clear gap in current departmental faculty interest areas. The faculty member making the recommendation must also make the case for why the person should be awarded adjunct status rather than serving as the external member on the committee.

Committee members who are not regular graduate faculty members are expected to hold the same or higher degree as that sought by the student. No more than one committee member may be a nonmember of the regular graduate faculty. Adjunct faculty members who hold an associate membership to graduate faculty status (e.g. faculty members at other institutions) can serve on graduate committees as the external member.

Adjunct faculty membership on a committee, as internal or external members, is limited to one. An adjunct faculty member cannot serve as chair of the committee. Faculty members at WVU can be either an internal or external member of the committee, dependent on their adjunct status.

If a WVU faculty member outside the department is an adjunct in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, they will serve as an internal member. If a WVU faculty member outside the department is not an adjunct, they will serve as an external member. External adjuncts (at another university) can only be external committee members.

### **5.3 Thesis and Doctoral Advisory Committee Responsibilities**

#### **5.3.1 Responsibilities of the Chair**

The Chair will be selected on the basis of content expertise.\* This should include topic interest or subject matter expertise, experience in thesis or dissertation direction, or methodology expertise. The Chair is responsible for guiding the candidate to produce MA/doctoral level, original scholarship in the proposed topic area.

The Chair's responsibilities include:

- Being familiar with the current comprehensive exam policies and procedures
- Guiding the candidate to develop a narrative and reading list for comprehensive exams
- Being familiar with current thesis/dissertation policies and procedures
- Advising the candidate from the prospectus stage through the final defense of the thesis/dissertation
- Guiding the candidate in the selection of thesis/dissertation committee members
- Guiding the candidate to set a realistic timeline for completion of the thesis/dissertation
- Responsibly assigning the candidate a grade of P (pass) or F (fail)
- Guiding the candidate toward achieving a high level of technical and ethical quality in the thesis/dissertation research
- Assisting the candidate in developing a quality prospectus and in navigating the prospectus approval process
- Providing guidance on the research proposal structure, formatting, content and setting clear expectations for timely completion of the proposal
- Guiding the candidate in the selection of methods/procedures for data collection and analysis\*\*
- Assisting the candidate in the thesis/dissertation proposal defense process
- Assisting the candidate in navigating the IRB approval process
- Assisting the candidate in data collection and analysis\*\*
- Preparing the candidate for the defense process

\*In special circumstances, with program approval, a Co-Chair arrangement may be appropriate for a particular subject matter.

\*\* If a separate Methodologist is assigned, the Chair may serve in a support role.

#### **5.3.2 Responsibilities of the Committee Members**

All members of the candidate's committee share responsibility in ensuring that the candidate produces high-quality scholarship. Committee members are responsible for reading manuscripts within the agreed-upon minimum 14 day time frame (per committee member), suggesting substantive editorial changes, and providing rationale for their support and critiques. Committee members who perceive major flaws that are likely to result in a candidate's unsuccessful defense should discuss these concerns with the candidate and Chair immediately.

Committee member's responsibilities include:

- In cooperation with the Chair advising the candidate in the creation of the narrative and reading list for comprehensive exams
- In cooperation with the Chair, advising the candidate from the prospectus stage through the final defense of the thesis/dissertation
- Providing subject matter expertise as requested by Chair or candidate
- Reading drafts and providing meaningful feedback at each defense stage of the thesis/dissertation process
- Guiding the candidate in the selection of methods/procedures for data collection and analysis\*\*
- Assisting the candidate in data collection and analysis\*\*
- Corresponding with the Chair and candidate as needed for clarification/resolution of methodological issues during the thesis/dissertation process\*\*

\*\* Methodologist only (if the Chair is not performing both roles). A Methodologist should be selected who has particular expertise in the type of study the candidate is pursuing (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods).

### **5.3.3 Responsibilities of the Doctoral Candidate**

The candidate is expected to engage in active preparation of the thesis/dissertation process from the onset of the doctoral program. Candidates are responsible for choosing a topic, submitting proofread drafts of materials to the Chair, preparing adequately for meetings, thoroughly reviewing all comprehensive exam and thesis/dissertation policies and procedures, and communicating on a regular basis with the Chair via email, phone, or other communication modality. The candidate is expected to maintain a respectful and professional attitude at all times.

Candidates are expected to maintain contact with the Chair throughout the comprehensive exam and thesis/dissertation process to ensure that the research and writing adhere to the agreed-upon plan. As the project is the candidate's responsibility, s/he must frequently keep the Chair informed of progress. The candidate should contact the Chair in the event of any changes which may interfere with program completion. Occasionally, face-to-face meetings may be scheduled with your Chair or the whole committee.

The candidate is responsible for meeting all deadlines set by the University for the submission of theses/dissertations.

## **6 REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE GRADUATE FACULTY**

### **6.1 Regular memberships**

Individuals who hold appointments at West Virginia University in tenure-track faculty positions or in full-time non-tenure-track faculty or faculty-equivalent positions and who are engaged in scholarly research or creative activity may be considered for regular membership. Regular members must present evidence of continuing scholarly research or creative activity. Criteria include one or more of the following: publication in major peer-reviewed journals, publication of books and book chapters, invited and/or competitively selected presentations of scholarly work

at national and international meetings, and presentations and performance of artistic work at professionally recognized events.

## **6.2 Associate memberships**

Individuals with ongoing involvement in graduate education at WVU may be considered for associate membership. These individuals may include WVU faculty members who do not meet the criteria for regular membership, non-faculty professionals with terminal degrees or equivalent expertise, and faculty members at other institutions. Associate members must present evidence of continuing scholarly or creative expertise or involvement in graduate education. Criteria usually include one or more of the following: research activity, scholarly publications, artistic performances or presentations, graduate-level teaching, and service on graduate committees.

## **6.3 Exceptions**

Graduate faculty members who leave WVU may continue to serve on student committees with their same graduate faculty status established prior to their departure. Normally, no candidate for a degree at WVU may be a regular or associate member of the graduate faculty. Emeritus faculty members may remain on the graduate faculty. New faculty members may be appointed as regular or associate graduate faculty members. Individual exceptions to membership criteria may be approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs.

## **6.4 Functions of Graduate Faculty Members**

Regular graduate faculty members may serve on and chair students' thesis and dissertation committees. Associate graduate faculty members may serve on students' thesis and dissertation committees, but may not chair them.

# **7 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

## **7.1 Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs)**

A graduate assistantship is part of your professional career whether the focus of that career is research, teaching, or public service. Accordingly, time management, focus on faculty and your studies should be your top priorities. Your assistantship is set up to assist you in these areas. It is a job. Your supervisor in this position is the Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. In addition, when you have problems or concerns, you may discuss these matters with the Associate Department Chair or the Director of Graduate Studies.

Overall your duties include grading exams, maintaining grade books, assisting with audio/visual resources, keeping attendance records, exam proctoring (including the SOCA computer testing lab in the Clark Hall research annex), and meeting the needs of the course instructors. You may be called up to present a class lecture or tutor students. You should review the course syllabi of all faculty you are assigned to. In this way you will be familiar with the class and know when important dates are approaching (exams) and be able to answer student questions, as needed.

### **7.1.1 Stipend and Tuition Waivers**

For your assistantship, you receive a stipend and tuition waiver. To receive your stipend, you must report to WVU Human Resources to complete hiring forms. Once on payroll (direct deposit required), pay statements will be received in the middle and at the end of each month. Staff can



provide exact dates as it may differ each month. Your 9-month assistantship begins August 16 and ends May 15.

GTA Tuition waivers are submitted prior to each semester. GTA tuition waivers are in effect during Fall and Spring unless you resign or lose your assistantship. GTAs who had tuition waivers for Fall and Spring are eligible for Summer tuition waivers. You need to contact the graduate liaison in the main office, if you are interested, and you must register for 6 credit hours.

### **7.1.2 Rights and grievances**

Continuation of your graduate assistantship is contingent on the quality of your work, your reliability and evaluations. Faculty and staff members for whom you complete tasks have the option of formally evaluating your work. If this is done, you have a right to see these evaluations during your spring evaluation.

If you should experience difficulties with your assignment, discuss the situation with the person assigning the task. Ask that particular person to establish his/her expectations for tasks and responsibilities, request syllabi and establish deadlines. If necessary ask for assignments in writing. Should the situation remain unresolved, graduate assistants should speak to the graduate director. After working with both the assigning person and the graduate director unsuccessfully, students should file a written complaint with the department chair. In the event that the chairperson is unable to resolve the situation then the Dean of Graduate Education may be contacted.

### **7.2 Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs)**

Graduate Research Assistantships are usually generated out of research grants secured by individual faculty members. Graduate Assistants are expected to work 20 hours a week. Applicants for GRA positions must apply directly to the faculty member actually doing the research. GRAs are typically hired because they have a particular skill (e.g., statistical analysis, data management, archival research skills) or they evidence the potential to provide important assistance to an ongoing research project.

### **7.3 Merit graduate tuition waivers**

Merit graduate tuition waivers are provided on a competitive and limited basis. These waivers are distributed by the College in cooperation with the WVU Office of Graduate Education and Life to enhance the academic reputation and effectiveness of graduate programs in terms of recruiting and retaining high quality graduate students.

Merit graduate tuition waivers are granted only to degree seeking students making adequate progress toward degree completion. These waivers may be used only for coursework required for the degree program in which the student is enrolled. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology receives a limited number of merit graduate tuition waiver credits and distributes them based on the strategic goals of the program and department. The waivers awarded to students may constitute a partial or full tuition scholarship. Merit graduate tuition waivers do not cover the cost of associated fees.

Students who are interested in applying for this award should contact the DGS. Additional information about merit tuition waivers can be found [here](#).

## **8 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT GUIDELINES AND TIME TO DEGREE**

A small number of department-assigned funding slots are reserved for incoming students. These are awarded based on a committee review that begins in February. Typically, departmental funding packages consist of a teaching or research assistantship, a full tuition waiver, and student health insurance. Students are responsible for College/University fees. Assistantship appointments are made fiscal year by fiscal year. Because of this, each appointment is made for one year or less. Students must make systematic progress toward their degrees and demonstrate satisfactory performance to ensure continued funding.

University and Department rules require that students be informed annually of their progress in meeting requirements and their likelihood of completing the doctoral program. The review is also used to assess funding status for the upcoming year. Students will complete the progress report via Qualtrics each spring for review by the student's advisor and the Graduate Program Committee (GPC). The GPC will meet in the spring to evaluate each student's academic progress and performance, evaluating professional potential in relation to the successful completion of specific benchmarks in the program, including coursework, thesis (if applicable), comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, etc. The review will consider:

- Satisfactory progress (see section 8.1)
- Satisfactory performance

Satisfactory performance includes GTA/GRA evaluations, performance as a scholar (e.g. presentations, publishing, etc.), and performance as a departmental citizen (e.g. attending department colloquium and talks). Each student's progress and performance is compared to the standards for normal progress, and to that of other students—particularly those who entered the same year. Students who do not meet the expectations for satisfactory progress and performance may not be renewed for assistantship funding. Students not making adequate progress in the program or with unsatisfactory performance may be denied funding for conference travel. The student's advisor and the GPC will provide written feedback to the student. The GPC feedback will:

- Summarize the evaluation of progress and standing
- Convey any special commendations or concerns
- State any specific risks to good standing, with the steps and deadlines for correcting those risks
- Indicate funding status for the upcoming academic year.

For those students who demonstrate satisfactory progress and performance, the student and advisor will meet to review the student's progress, goals, and timeline to meeting program objectives and requirements. For students determined not to be making satisfactory progress toward completion of program requirements or do not meet the requirements of satisfactory performance, the student, advisor, and Director of Graduate Studies will meet to discuss the student's progress to date and jointly outline a course of action to move toward meeting the requirements of the doctoral program. Formal, signed documentation of this meeting will be placed on record in the student's file in the Sociology Department. The student, advisor, and Director of Graduate Studies are jointly responsible for monitoring whether the student meets the objectives outlined in the work plan during this probationary period in the program. Failure to

adhere to the work plan in terms of deadlines and objectives within the specified time frame will result in dismissal from the graduate program.

Expected completion based on degree requirements is 5 years. As such, the GPC will prioritize funding students through their fifth year, contingent upon making satisfactory progress and demonstrating satisfactory performance in the program as determined by the annual review. This allows for turnover of GA lines to fund incoming cohorts. The students' start date is considered the first semester in which they were enrolled in the graduate program. Funding includes any source—GTAs and GRAs within the department, outside GRAs/GTAs, or fellowships. Most college or department funded assistantships (e.g. Eberly funded GTAs, department funded assistantships associated with research or teaching) will thus be designated for students in their first through fifth years and will only be given to students beyond their fifth year if students who are in good standing in previous cohorts are funded. Students are determined to be in good standing based on their satisfactory progress and performance as noted in the annual review. Faculty funded GRA lines (e.g. grant funded) are left to the discretion of the faculty member who may give them to students in any year of the program.

Students in their 6<sup>th</sup> (plus) years are eligible to apply for GA funding in the department when funding lines are available. Decisions will be made based on:

- 1) Students who have secured outside funding (e.g. fellowships) in previous years
- 2) Success in the program (e.g. presentations, publications/reports, awards, professional development experiences, etc.)
- 3) Being a good citizen of the department
- 4) Excellence in teaching and department need (for GTA lines)
- 5) Required skills/competencies (for GRA lines)

## 8.1 Criteria for Satisfactory Progress

Below is a brief summary of key program objectives and general deadlines for accomplishing them. It is recognized that no absolute criteria for evaluating progress toward degree are appropriate. However, the following criteria may be used for assessing progress during diagnostic reviews, decisions concerning offering or continuing assistantships, and establishing priorities for other types of departmental support, such as part-time instructorships. *The progression of requirements applies to both Master's and doctoral students who enter the program with a baccalaureate degree.* See section 11 (“Course Transfers and Waivers”) for the abbreviated requirements for students who enter the program with a Master’s degree.

### Year 1

#### First semester:

1. Orientation. Students learn about the program and get acquainted with the faculty, staff, and fellow students. Students with Graduate Teaching Assistantships receive information about office procedures, job responsibilities and rights.
2. Search for chair of advisory committee. During the first semester, students should review possible areas of study for their Master’s thesis and begin locating relevant faculty advisors. In the process, they may consult the descriptions of faculty on the

department's website ([http://soca.wvu.edu/faculty\\_staff](http://soca.wvu.edu/faculty_staff)) to solicit advice from specific professors. By the end of the first semester, students should be thinking seriously about their selection of an advisory committee chair who will serve as the main advisor on their master's thesis, and may also direct their comprehensive exams and dissertation.

### **Second semester:**

1. Select chair of advisory committee. By mid-semester students should select a thesis advisor who will serve as the chair the advisory committee.
2. Design thesis proposal. Students are strongly encouraged to meet regularly with their chair to finish assembling their three-member advisory committee and begin designing a master's thesis proposal.
3. Complete plan of study. The "Plan of Study" document must be completed in Degree Works.
4. Annual evaluation. All students will complete an annual evaluation in the spring semester.

### **Year 2**

#### **Third semester:**

1. Defend master's thesis proposal. All students must write and defend their master's thesis proposal by mid semester. The deadline is November 20. After a successful defense, students must complete a "graduate prospectus defense" form, have it signed by all three members of the advisory committee and submit the form in the main office to have it placed in the student's file.
2. Apply for graduation. An application for graduation is due to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Records Office. An application for graduation will not be accepted for May graduation unless an approved thesis proposal is in the academic file.

#### **Fourth semester:**

1. Defend master's thesis. All students must give a public presentation of their master's thesis.
2. Meet graduation deadlines. Students should consult closely with the graduate liaison to meet departmental and college expectations and graduation deadlines. Graduation deadlines are determined by the College and are subject to change. All forms must reach the department liaison 24 hours prior to the College deadlines to allow time for review and processing of documents. Two weeks prior to a scheduled defense an [Eberly College Thesis and Dissertation Defense Date Declaration Form](#) is due. For the purpose of the defense, students must bring a [Eberly College Thesis and Dissertation Oral Defense Form](#) and have it filled out and signed by all committee members after the defense. This form must be submitted to the department liaison

immediately after the defense. Students should also bring an [EDT](#) Signature Form to the defense. The students' thesis committee may elect to withhold signatures on this form until revisions are complete. This form must be signed before submission to the library.

3. Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD). Master's theses are required to be submitted electronically. ETD technical assistance is offered by the Office of Information Technology.
5. Update plan of study. Students who move on to the PhD program should meet with the chair of their advisory committee and plan for the remaining coursework, comprehensive exams, and the dissertation. Students should update the plan of study document in Degree Works.
4. Annual evaluation. All students will complete an annual evaluation in the spring semester.

### **Year 3**

1. Comprehensive exams. Exams should take place in the last semester of coursework or in the semester immediately following the completion of coursework. Working with the advisory committee, students prepare and carry out comprehensive examinations. See section 4.5 above for more information.
2. Update plan of study. The "Plan of Study" document must be updated in Degree Works.
3. Annual evaluation. All students will complete an annual evaluation in the spring semester.

### **Year 4**

1. Comprehensive exams. Exams should take place in the last semester of coursework or in the semester immediately following the completion of coursework. Exams should be completed by the fall semester.
2. Defend dissertation proposal. Students should defend their dissertation proposal after the successful completion of comprehensive exams. After a successful defense, students must complete a "dissertation defense" form, have it signed by all five members of the advisory committee and submit the form in the main office to have it placed in the student's file.
3. Update plan of study. The "Plan of Study" document must be updated in Degree Works.
4. Annual evaluation. All students will complete an annual evaluation in the spring semester.

## **Year 5**

1. Defend dissertation. All students must give a public presentation of their dissertation.
2. Meet graduation deadlines. Students should consult closely with the graduate liaison to meet departmental and college expectations and graduation deadlines. For more information, see the graduation deadlines for the master's thesis discussed above.
3. Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD). Dissertations are required to be submitted electronically. ETD technical assistance is offered by the Office of Information Technology.

## **9 GUIDELINES FOR TERMINATING STUDENTS FROM THE PROGRAM**

A proposed termination of a student from the graduate program must come from the department chair. The chair of a student's advisory committee may ask the department chair to make such a recommendation. Reasons for terminating a student include: a persistent failure to keep course grades above the required level for receiving the degree, failing twice to defend the master's thesis, twice failing comprehensive exams, failing to make satisfactory progress towards completing a degree. Students may file an appeal if they feel that they have been terminated unfairly.

## **10 CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION POLICY**

In any term during which a graduate student is using University libraries or research facilities, consulting with graduate committee members, or completing a thesis or dissertation (including the thesis or dissertation defense and submission of the ETD), the student must enroll for at least one hour of graduate credit. Students who take courses intermittently may be excused from such continuous enrollment if they are not using University facilities or consulting with faculty while they are not enrolled. However, students formally admitted to candidacy for graduate degrees are required to register for at least one credit hour each fall and spring term as a condition of their continued candidacy. Individual programs may also require summer enrollment. By pursuing a degree, such persons by definition are utilizing University services, facilities, and other resources, including faculty expertise; this situation continues in cases where students have completed all required coursework and are working on a thesis or dissertation. Candidates for graduate degrees who fail to maintain continuity of enrollment may be dropped from candidacy.

Students who have completed all requirements for a degree (including the thesis or dissertation defense and submission of the ETD) prior to the beginning of the term of graduation do not need to enroll during that term.

## **11 WAIVERS AND DEFERRED ENROLLMENT**

### **11.1 Waiver of Master's thesis requirement**

Students entering the graduate program in sociology can request to have the thesis requirement waived if they have written a master's thesis in sociology or in a related field. The thesis will be evaluated by all members of the graduate committee, who will read the thesis and provide letters to the Graduate Director asserting that the thesis meets the expectations of the Department. Students who have written their thesis in a language other than English must also provide an

English translation of their work to the Department of Sociology. This translation will be evaluated according to the criteria and procedures described above.

### **11.2 Deferred enrollment**

If students are accepted to the program but experience unforeseen circumstances that do not allow them to attend, students can defer their enrollment for one year. Students need to request deferment from the Director of Graduate Studies in writing. Students who are accepted into the program who do not officially request a deferred enrollment must reapply to the program if they wish to be considered for enrollment the following term.

## **12 RESEARCH ON HUMAN SUBJECTS**

If human research subjects are to be used in primary data collection, students may need to apply for approval through WVU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning their data collection. IRB approval is needed for secondary data analysis only when identifiers, such as subjects' names or addresses, are included in the dataset. In all other cases, secondary data analysis does not require IRB approval. Students should consult their committee chair about this matter, and learn more about the IRB process online at:

[http://oric.research.wvu.edu/human\\_subjects\\_research\\_and\\_the\\_irb](http://oric.research.wvu.edu/human_subjects_research_and_the_irb).

## **13 ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND MISCONDUCT**

Students of West Virginia University are citizens of a broader academic community. As such, the University expects that every member of its academic community share its historic and traditional commitment to honesty, integrity, and the search for truth. To meet these standards, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students should review of the University's Graduate Catalogue to review the definitions and consequences of academic dishonesty and misconduct.

## **14 RESPONSIBLE AUTHORSHIP**

Faculty and students are expected to adhere to the authorship guidelines provided by the [American Sociological Association](#).

### **14.1 ASA Code of Ethics Section 14**

Sociologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have made a substantial contribution.

(a) In collaborative work, both within Sociology and across disciplines, research teams vary with regard to decisions about the order of authorship. Although there are alternate approaches (which may be explained in a footnote or acknowledgement), the default order of authorship in Sociology is based on the relative scientific or professional contributions of the authors.

(b) When collaborative work substantially derives from a student's dissertation or thesis, the student is usually listed as first author.

Full ASA code of ethics available [here](#).

### **14.2 Additional resources for authorship**

Students and faculty should refer to the following resources for additional guidelines.

### **14.2.1 APA Code of Ethics Section 8.12**

(a) Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. (See also Standard [8.12b, Publication Credit](#).)

(b) Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.

(c) Except under exceptional circumstances, a student is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student's doctoral dissertation. Faculty advisors discuss publication credit with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate. (See also Standard [8.12b, Publication Credit](#).)

Full APA code of ethics available [here](#).

### **12.2.2 Other relevant links**

[Authorship credit \(ASA\)](#)

[Determining and negotiating authorship](#) (APA)

[Authorship determination scorecard](#) (APA)

[Graduate student's guide to authorship](#) (APA)

## **15 HANDBOOK ALTERATION POLICY**

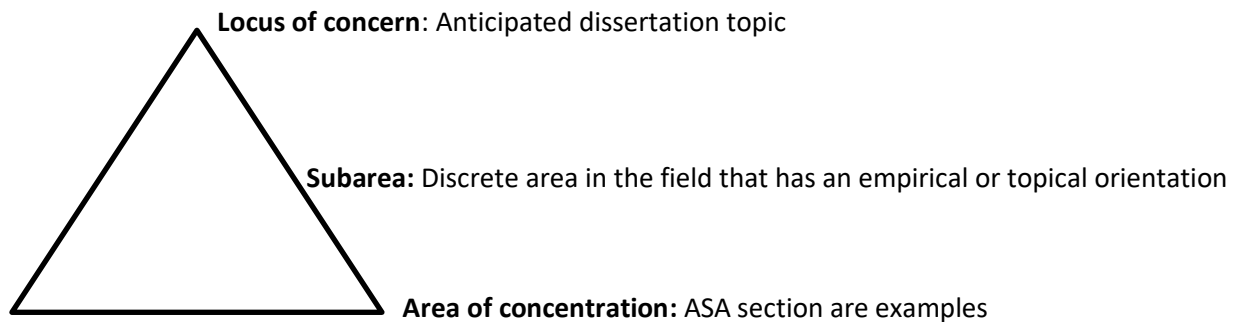
All substantive changes to the Graduate Handbook must be submitted for the consideration of the faculty one week prior to a full-faculty meeting.



## APPENDIX A: Comprehensive Exam Models

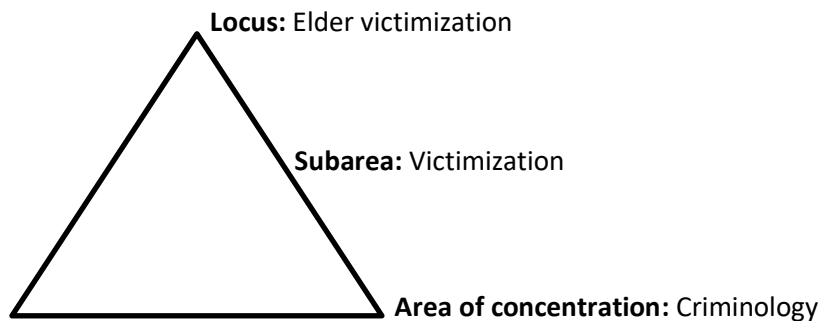
### Triangle Model

The Triangle Model begins with an exploration of master works in a student's area of concentration (e.g., criminology or sociology of religion). This exploration is followed by specification and exploration of a subarea within the area, one that has a discrete topical or empirical orientation (e.g., victimization or religion and civic engagement/political activism). Finally, a particular well-developed locus of concern (e.g., elder victimization or congregational contexts and civic engagement) is articulated and critiqued. The dissertation is anticipated to focus on the locus of concern.

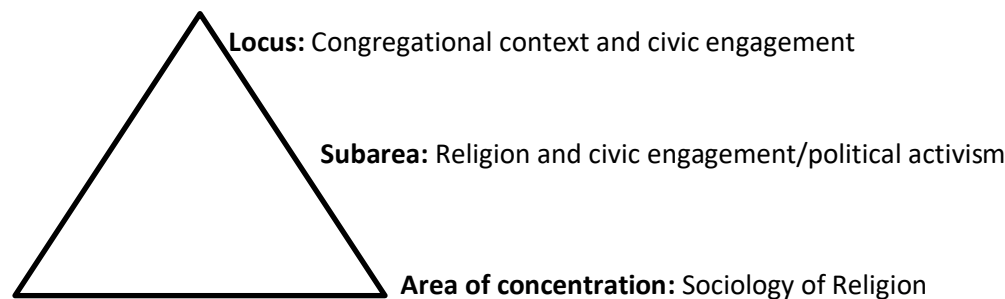


### Examples

Research topic: Elder victimization



Research question: What is the relationship between congregational context and civic engagement?



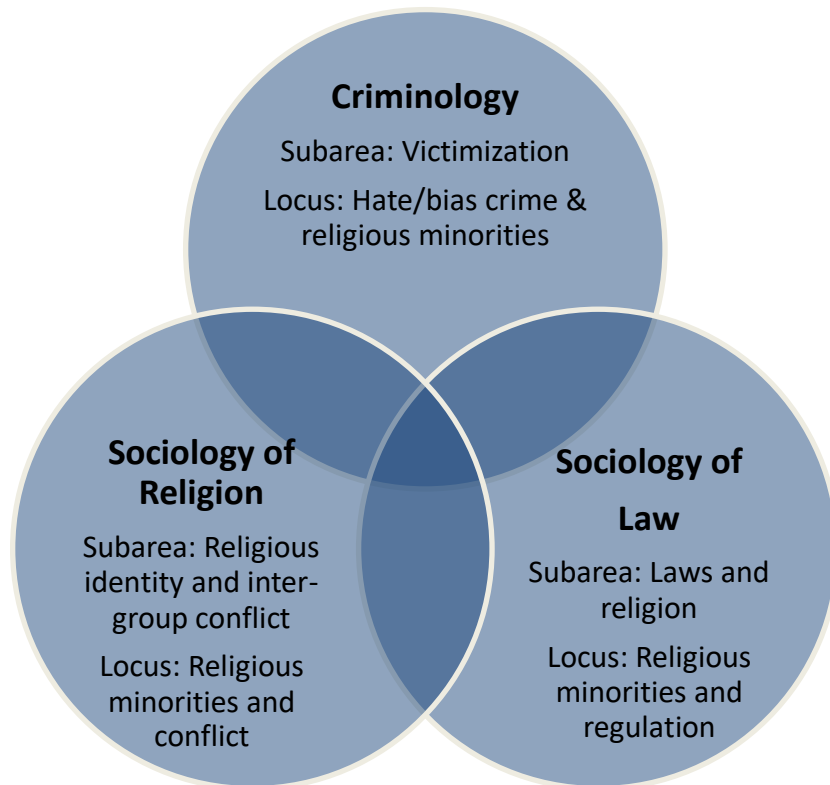
## Venn Diagram Model

The Venn Model begins with three analytically discrete areas that intersect and overlap. Within each area of concentration, a student must define and show an understanding of key texts, explain how and why certain areas of concern in these texts matter, and locate these moments in particular exchanges or empirical issues. Often the central components within each area will reflect overlap between areas, and the particular locus of concern will be the place where all three areas overlap. The dissertation is anticipated to be oriented around multiple perspectives on, or synthetic views of, sociological phenomena within the three areas.

### *Examples:*

Research Question: How does a country's legal context affect a religious minority's risk of victimization?

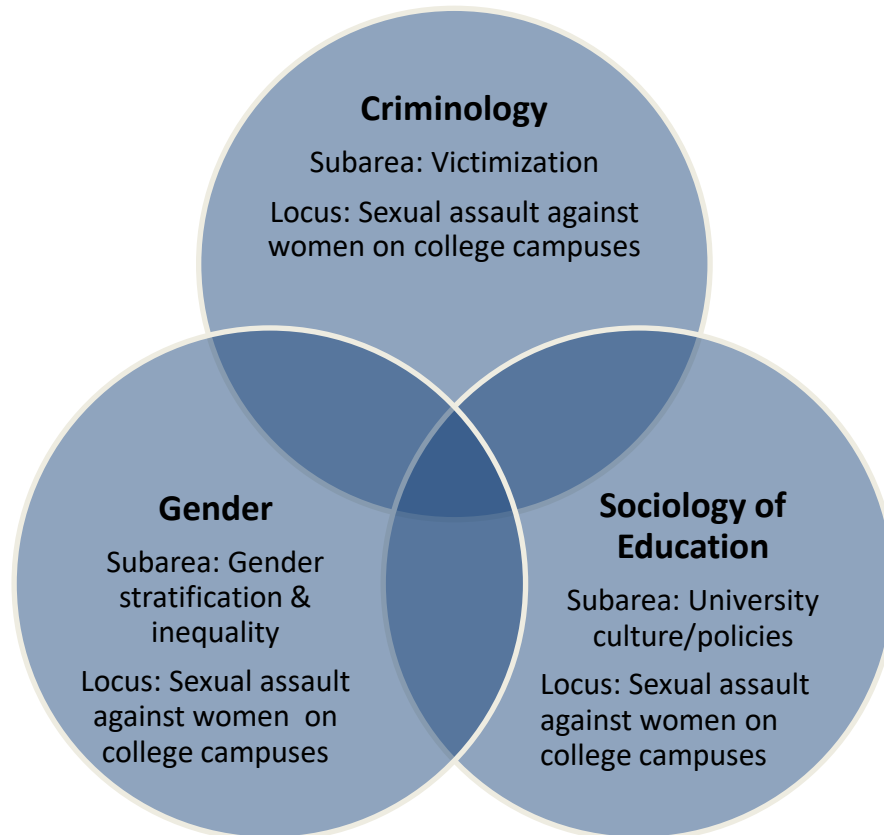
Locus of concern overlaps across all areas with a focus on religious minorities.



**Examples:**

Research Question: How does a university's culture and policies affect sexual assault against women on college campuses?

Locus of concern overlaps across all areas with a focus on sexual assault against women on college campuses.



**Examples:**

Research Topic: Social determinants of inequalities in health.

Locus of concern overlaps across all areas with a focus on determinants of health disparities.

