Graduate Handbook

Ph.D. Program in Sociology

Department of Sociology

University of Colorado Boulder

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Introduction

This handbook summarizes the relevant policies for the Ph.D. program in the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU). Graduate students are subject to the rules and policies outlined in both the CU Graduate School and departmental handbook. As the handbook is updated annually, some policies will change and/or be refined. Overall, this handbook provides the expected timelines and milestones each graduate student will need to meet in order to successfully complete the Ph.D. requirements for the Department of Sociology. This document serves as a reference for faculty advisors and graduate students to provide guidance on how to successfully progress through the Ph.D. program. For more information and to download a copy of this handbook, please visit the following link.

Overview of Ph.D. Program Requirements

The Department of Sociology offers graduate-level training and culminates in the successful defense and completion of all milestone and requirements leading to a Ph.D. degree. Our program seeks to:

- Provide sound training in sociological theory and methodology.
- Provide mentorship through one-on-one faculty-student advising relationships, student-student working relationships, and a year-long Professional Seminar (ProSem) course during Year 1 of the program.
- Give students clear and informed feedback on progress and standing in the program.
- Socialize students into the norms of the academic profession by informing them about the broader professional expectations and best practices not traditionally covered in substantive graduate seminars.
- Train students to become competent instructors and researchers.

Over the course of this program, you'll meet the following requirements:

- *Maintenance of full-time student status*
- *Successful Annual Review*
- *Successful completion of Required Seminars & "Preliminary Exams" (end of Year Two)*
- *Successful completion of Specialty Area Exams (end of Year Three)*
- *Successful completion of the "Publishable Paper" (End of Year Four)*
- *Successful completion and defense of dissertation proposal/prospectus (End of Year 5)*
- *Successful completion and defense of dissertation project.*

Each of these listed requirements is described in further detail below.

Minimum Course Hours

- To earn a PhD, students must complete a total of 45 hours of course work credits.
  - At least 24 hours of these credits must be within the Department of Sociology on the CU Boulder campus.
  - To qualify for graduate credit, all courses taken within the Department of Sociology must be numbered 5000 or above and assessment of student performance must be via a letter grade. Any other grade designation including classes assessed via "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" designations (formerly "pass" or "fail" designations) will not count towards the total course hours needed to complete the degree requirements.
  - The total hours of course work can consist of the required graduate seminars, an independent study course and/or guided research, and dissertation hours.

Sequence Through the Program

This section provides the relevant information regarding your trajectory though the graduate program. You'll find information regarding the timing of major milestones and an outline of the required graduate seminars for each year of the program. For more information regarding the expectations and regulations of the major milestone, please see that section below.

Registration for Graduate Seminars and Dissertation Hours
- All graduate students should register for required and elected seminars as soon as possible after having been admitted to the program, after receiving registration materials and/or when the registration window officially opens in BuffPortal.
- Graduate students who wish to enroll in independent study, guided research, dissertation hours, or master's thesis hours should contact the Graduate Program Assistant *at least two weeks* prior to the start of an academic term and ask to be enrolled in a specific number of hours, as determined by the student and their primary faculty advisor.
- Students who register late may incur financial penalties and may find it difficult to enroll in desired courses. Failure to complete registration as soon as possible may also lead to the cancellation of graduate seminars due to insufficient enrollment.
- Further information about registration can [here](#).

Develop Specialty Areas
From the time they enter the program, students should consider specialty areas and direct their work toward building a knowledge base in those areas. One's specialty areas are those in which you will become sufficiently qualified to teach and do research. Students should endeavor to take courses in their specialty areas. Throughout Year 1 and Year 2 of the program, students should identify faculty members who can provide mentoring in these areas. By the end of Year 2, students—with consultation with faculty in these areas—should have finalized a reading list for their Specialty Area Exams.
- To find examples of permissible "areas," [see the Current Sections of the American Sociological Association](#).
- Also see the [Ph.D. Program Milestone Documents & Handbook](#) webpage for a list of specialty areas and reading lists currently offered in the Department.

Admission & Establishing In-State Residency
The CU Boulder Sociology graduate program admits students only for a fall start. Completed applications must be submitted online to the Graduate School by the admissions application due date. Acceptance to the graduate program in the Department of Sociology does not guarantee admission by the Graduate School. In some cases, the department or the Graduate School may grant provisional admission. The department requires students admitted provisionally to complete 12 credit hours of graduate work with a GPA of 3.5 or better during the first year. The department may require a student to fulfill additional requirements for provisional acceptance.

By the end of your first year in the program, you must establish in-state residency. More information about how to meet the requirements to establish residency, please visit the following [link](#). All relevant communications regarding residency will be sent via email by the Graduate Program Assistant.

Year One
During your first year in the program, you'll be required to take a set number of required courses (listed below). During your first year, you will also take a Professional Seminar (ProSem), which will introduce you to faculty, provide space to address any questions or concerns regarding professional development (teaching, conferences, CV construction, etc.). During your first year, you are encouraged to reach out to faculty members whose interests and advising styles meet your needs and establish a primary advisor. For more information about advising, including expectations and timelines, please jump to the section "Advising System."

Required Courses:

Fall Semester:	Spring Semester:
SOCY 7171 (3 credits) Logics of Inquiry SOCY 5111 (3 credits) Statistics 1 SOCY 5201 (3 credits) Classical Sociological Theory SOCY 6831 (1 credit) Weekly Graduate Professional Seminar (ProSem)	SOCY 6111 (3 credits) Statistics 2 SOCY 5202 (3 credits) Contemporary Sociological Theory SOCY 6831 (1 credit) Bi-Weekly Graduate Professional Seminar (ProSem)

Graduate Students may not postpone taking the required courses past the scheduled semester as listed in the handbook unless they successfully petition the Graduate Committee for an exception. For more information about this process and its requirements, please visit the "Graduate Student Petitions" section below. Keep in mind that postponing required courses increases the risk of that the student will (1) have completed "Preliminary Examinations" by the end of year two and/or (2) have completed the required 45 credit hours in time to be eligible to take their specialty area exams by the end of year three.

It is recommended that you take the required advanced methods course in either year two or three of the program. Some commonly offered advanced methods courses are Qualitative Analysis [SOCY 7121], Historical Methods [SOCY 5350], and Statistics 3 [SOCY 7111]. There are other advanced methods courses offered within and outside the department that can be approved (via a petition to the graduate committee) to meet this requirement.

Department/Limited Credit Seminars
- SOCY 6831 (1 Credit, each semester) Graduate Professional Seminar (ProSem)
  - Students in their first year are required to attend the Graduate Sociology ProSem series. In the Fall Semester, students will meet weekly with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to discuss the Department's PhD program and expectations, introduce faculty members and their research, and to provide a communal forum for the cohort to discuss professional issues related to the discipline and academia more generally. In Spring Semester, meetings will be bi-weekly and offer similar mentorship.

- SOCY 6851 (2 Credits, cross-listed, each semester) Interdisciplinary Professional Socialization Seminar (IPSS)
  - This interdisciplinary seminar for the social sciences features weekly topics with guest speakers on various issues related to professional socialization within and outside the academy. Students workshop professional socialization materials at the end of each semester. This course is not required and may be repeated once for credit.

Year Two
- In your second year, you are expected to maintain full-time student status. This simply means you must enroll in elective seminars for a minimum of 5 credit hours per semester. During your second and third year, you'll also complete any remaining required coursework and maintain good standing in the department to successfully complete "preliminary examinations."
  - o The "preliminary examinations" are your required sociology seminar classes. In order to complete this work and maintain "good standing" in the department, you'll need to earn at least a "B" in each required course.
  - o In addition, you'll need to maintain an overall GPA of 3.5 or higher and have no outstanding "Incompletes" (I) grades in any of the required courses.
  - o Complete 30 credit hours (excluding dissertation hours) by the end of year two to be eligible for funding in year three. The 30 hours can include independent study and guided research courses.
- During this year in the program, you should also form your Specialty Area Exam Committee (SAEC). For more detailed information and requirements for this milestone, please visit the section titled "Specialty Area Exams."
- By the end of the spring semester, you must formally establish a primary advisor, a SAEC, finalize your reading lists, and prepare for specialty areas exams during the summer months between year two and three.
- The department will provide summer funding to assist graduate students in collaboration with their faculty advisor to finalize the readings lists for the specialty area exam.

Year Three
- In your third year in the program, it is expected that you continue to maintain full-time student status by enrolling in elective seminars or dissertation credit hours for a minimum of 5 credit hours.
- During your third year, you'll have the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the specialty areas you have selected as your primary focus in the form of a Specialty Area Exam. For further information, including timeline, assessment process, and a description of the terminal MA option, please visit the "Specialty Areas Exam" section below.
- Explore options for summer funding here and here. Typical funding mechanisms for summer include teaching, TA/RA appointments, fellowships, faculty-student collaborations.

Year Four
- In your fourth year in the program, you'll be expected to continue maintaining full-time student status by enrolling in elective seminars or "dissertation credit hours" for a minimum of 5 credit hours per semester.
- During your fourth year in the program, you'll complete the "Publishable Paper" milestone. This requirement is intended to give students extensive practice with the research process and result in a submission to a scholarly journal for possible peer-reviewed publication. For more detailed information about the expectations and requirements for this milestone, please visit the section titled "Publishable Paper."
    o This milestone can also be used toward obtaining a "M.A.-Along-the-Way." For further information regarding this option, please see the section titled "Master of Arts Degree Options."

Year Five and Beyond
- In your time during the fifth year and beyond in the program, you'll be expected to continue maintaining full-time student status by enrolling for a minimum of 5 dissertation credit hours each semester until passing the dissertation defense. You must complete 30 dissertation credit hours, post-specialty areas exams to meet the graduation requirements for the Ph.D. degree.
- Once you have successfully passed the specialty areas exam milestone, you'll form your Dissertation committee, write, and defend a dissertation proposal/prospectus, and write and defend a dissertation. For further information about the formation of your dissertation committee and the dissertation process more generally, please see the section titled "Dissertation."
- The graduate school allows six years from the commencement of course work in a graduate program for completion of requirements, including the filing of the dissertation. However, starting in Year Six, a graduate student and their advisor may request an extension of the time limit.
    o This request will be initiated via email from the Graduate School and the form provided will be reviewed by the student's primary faculty advisor and the Graduate Program Assistant. The Graduate School will send the completed form via email with their decision to the student, their advisor, and the Graduate Program Assistant.

Expectations of Graduate Student Conduct
This section provides information regarding the University's and the Department of Sociology's expectations for graduate student conduct. In this section, you'll find the seminar grading rubric, policies detailing plagiarism, the graduate committee petition process, leave of absence program, and how to demonstrate adequate progress toward your degree.

Department Communications
All essential university and departmental information will be sent out via the *gradsocy@colorado.edu* listserv. This address is useable by graduate students, faculty, and staff to communicate with the entire graduate student body within the Department of Sociology. Much of the official business of the university occurs via email. Thus, all enrolled graduate students must maintain access and regularly check the @colorado.edu email address given to you

during the onboarding process. Especially regarding departmental information, teaching, and any requests or inquiries, the department encourages graduate students to respond to emails in a timely manner.

Grading Rubric for Required Sociology Seminars
- o Faculty members who teach required graduate seminars are asked to use the following grading rubric; those teaching other graduate seminars are urged, but not required to adopt it. Faculty members who choose *not* to adopt this rubric must state that they are not using the standard rubric and describe how their grading will work.

A	Consistently performs above expectations for the course.
A-	Occasionally performs above expectations for the course.
B+	Meets expectations of the course.
B	Occasionally performs below the expectations of the course.
B-	Consistently performs below the expectations of the course.
C range	Unsatisfactory work for a Ph.D. student.

Note: While a B+ is a "meets expectations" grade, it is not expected to serve as a mathematical average for the class. That is, there is no expectation that half the students will perform above and half below a B+. An "A" grade is the modal grade given in CU Sociology graduate seminars.

Wavier Policy for Required Classes
The graduate committee does not usually grant waivers for required courses based on graduate coursework completed elsewhere. However, if a student petitions the graduate committee to consider waving a required course they may do so for the following courses:
- Logics of Inquiry (SOCY 7171)
- Classical Sociological Theory (SOCY 5201)
- Contemporary Sociological Theory (SOCY 5202)
- Stats 1 (SOCY 5111)
- Stats 2 (SOCY 6111)
- ProSem (SOCY 6831)
- One advanced methods course (e.g., Qual Analysis [SOCY 7121], Historical Methods [SOCY 5350], Stats 3 [SOCY 7111])

Students who believe that they have completed graduate-level courses of equivalent depth and rigor elsewhere may submit a petition requesting a waiver of one or more of these required courses. The petition must include a brief letter explaining why the student wishes to waive the requirement, as well as copies of the syllabus, assignments, and the student's written works and final grades from the previous course.

These materials should be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant for review by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) before August 1 of the entering year or, for courses offered later than the first semester, two months prior to the start of the semester in which the relevant seminar is taught. The Graduate Committee will review the request in consultation with faculty teaching the required courses and decide prior to the start of the semester. Transfer of credit does not imply waiver of courses. Waiver of required courses is a much rarer occurrence and involves a separate request and deliberation process.

Transfer of Credit
In accordance with CU Boulder Graduate School policy, the department accepts a maximum of 21 graduate-level credit hours from another college or university toward fulfillment of the coursework requirements of the PhD degree. Students may submit requests for transfer of credit only after completing 6 credits hours of graduate-level course work on the CU Boulder campus with an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Transferred credits do not reduce the minimum registration requirements but can reduce the amount of formal course work required and can reduce the time required to fulfill program milestones (e.g., can affect the time at which students take their Specialty Area Exams). In summary, students may transfer 21 credit hours for the PhD and 9 credit hours for the MA. Click here for the Transfer Credit Form.

Demonstration of Adequate Progress
Students must meet the following minimum requirements to demonstrate adequate progress and good standing in the program and department:
- Maintain an overall grade point average of at least 3.5 and have no outstanding incompletes.
- Complete the course work equivalent of the "Preliminary Exams" by the end of Year 2
- Receive satisfactory annual reviews
- Pass the Specialty Area Exam by the end of Year 3
- Fulfill the "Publishable Paper" requirement by the end of Year 4
- Register continuously for at least 5 dissertation credit hours every fall and spring semester beginning spring semester of Year 3, extending through the academic term (including summer) in which the dissertation is successfully defended
- Pass the dissertation proposal defense by the end of Year 5
- Complete the requirements for the doctoral degree within reasonable time

Graduate Student Petitions
You may petition the Graduate Committee to request exceptions to rules when extenuating circumstances arise. A petition should take the form of a concise memo or letter. The length of the petition will depend on the amount of explanation required. Students should address petitions to the Graduate Committee and the text of the petition should include:
- An appropriately detailed summary of the issue, as determined by the graduate student petitioner.
- A statement of student's preference of "audience" for the discussion of the petition.
  - Elected student representatives to the Graduate Committee will be included in the committee's deliberations of the student's petition only by request of the petitioner. Otherwise, they will be dismissed from the discussion of the submitted petition.
- The names of the student's relevant committee members and/or primary advisor.
  - If having not yet taken specialty area exams, the relevant committee would be the student's SAEC.
  - If the student has passed exams but is currently working on their "Publishable Paper," the relevant committee would be the student's Publishable Paper Committee.
- The signatures of the student and their primary faculty advisor.

Students should submit petitions to the Graduate Program Assistant (GPA) and the DGS. In general, the Graduate Committee places petitions on the next meeting's agenda after receipt of the petition.

The Graduate Committee meets monthly during the academic year. It does not meet during the summer. Students should plan to submit petitions for consideration during the fall and spring semesters accordingly. The committee considers petitions on a case-by-case basis. The outcomes of past petitions submitted to the Graduate Committee do not constitute precedent nor policy and in no way indicate the outcome of future petitions submitted by other students.

Leave of Absence Program
The leave of absence program allows students who have not yet passed the specialty areas exam stage to leave the graduate program for a specified period without penalty. Students who have passed the specialty areas exam and wish to take time off should notify the Graduate Program Assistant by email for further assistance or visit the Graduate School website. Doctoral candidates, who are required to maintain continuous registration, are permitted to take a leave of absence for parental leave and may petition for an exception to take a leave of absence when other extenuating circumstances exist.

- Students in good standing who wish to take time off must:
    1. Petition the Graduate Committee for approval.
    2. Apply for a leave of absence through the Registrar's Office.

The graduate leave of absence application is available on the Registrar's Office website and here. The student is responsible for obtaining all required signatures. The $50 fee must accompany the application, with all required signatures, or it will not be processed.

Returning from a Leave of Absence Requirements
- A student who does not register for fall or spring and does not apply for a leave of absence will be discontinued and must reapply for admission to the university to resume graduate study at CU Boulder.
- Taking a leave of absence does not extend the six-year time limit but may be used as a reason for requesting a time extension.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. In cases of suspected plagiarism, the Graduate Committee will meet with the student's advisor to review the evidence and determine the appropriate action for the student. Detailed information on the university's academic integrity policy can be found here.

Faculty and Graduate Student Advising System
Each incoming student must enroll in a yearlong Sociology Professionalization Seminar (ProSem) to help guide the student through the first year of the Ph.D. program. Each incoming student will also be assigned a graduate student mentor. Under the first year advising system, students are encouraged to discuss challenges and successes regarding the different facets of the program in ProSem, with their student mentor, and emerging faculty mentors.

Students are also encouraged to reach out to faculty and senior graduate students to inquire and learn about the research specialties of the department. As each student progresses through required coursework and electives in the first two years of the program, they should develop their own research interests while getting to know faculty members in the department. Once a student has had an opportunity to meet faculty, decisions regarding long-term advisors should be made following their first-year experience. Ideally, each graduate student will have selected and formally established a faculty member as their primary advisor, by the end of year one.

By the end of Year 2, graduate students are expected to have identified their primary faculty advisor. Only members of the graduate faculty of the Department of Sociology (i.e., tenured or tenure-track faculty) or those specifically appointed by the Graduate Committee can act as primary advisors to graduate students.

Although students find advisors in many ways, the procedure for doing so often begins by locating faculty members with interests that match their own. After an introductory meeting, the student and faculty member should discuss each other's expectations, capacities, and timelines. *We strongly encourage both the student and the prospective faculty advisor to review the Department's mentoring documents together* ("Expectations for Advising and Interactions Between Faculty and Students").

Once a faculty member agrees to serve as advisor, the student should notify the Graduate Program Assistant via email. Students should then work with their primary faculty advisors to select other faculty members to serve on their Specialty Area Examination Committee (SAEC, Year 3), their "Publishable Paper" Committee (PPC, Year 4), and their dissertation committee (Year 5 and beyond).

Changing Primary Faculty Advisors and/or Committee Members
Finding the right advisor is a nuanced process and graduate students are encouraged to ask potential advisors about their advising style and process. If at any time, students feel as though the advising relationship no longer fits with their trajectory thought the program, they may change advisors. This also applies to any of the committees formed for each of the milestones. If you switch advisors or change the composition of a committee, you are responsible for informing the Graduate Program Assistant and the affected faculty of any changes via email.

Annual Review
Every spring, department faculty and the Graduate Committee conduct a review of all students enrolled in the PhD program. The process involves gathering information on student progress and student aims, identifying students who are struggling to make adequate progress, and providing those students with feedback for improvement. While the process focuses on helping students through the program, students who fail to respond satisfactorily to feedback may face probation or be recommended to the Graduate School for dismissal from the program.

The Graduate Committee, with input from faculty members teaching graduate courses, faculty advisors, and faculty supervising TAs or research projects, conducts a review of students' progress. Students who have not met minimum requirements as laid out in the section, Demonstrate Adequate Progress, or students who are identified as struggling in one or more areas of the graduate program, may receive a plan with directive for continuing in the graduate program, containing concrete steps for returning to good standing in the program. Students who have not completed the plan satisfactorily within the specified time frame, or whose progress is far enough from adequate that a probation plan is not feasible, may be recommended to the Graduate School for dismissal from the program. The Graduate Committee uses feedback from three sources for the review: students, primary advisors, and other faculty members the student has worked closely with or taken classes from.

Student Progress Reports
All students in the program are required to complete the "Graduate Student Annual Report of Progress" which includes all program requirements. In the report, students record course work, specialty areas, teaching assignments, status of comp exams, papers presented, awards and grants received, and other information relevant to evaluation. Students should assemble a CV (curriculum vitae) starting in their first year and to continue to update it in subsequent years. Every student must submit a progress report and CV to both the Graduate Program Assistant and their faculty advisor by the specified date provided via email in March or April of each academic year.

Faculty Advisor Assessments
Each faculty member should assess whether individual meetings with their advisees are necessary prior to writing assessments of advisee progress. Such meetings should happen by the specified submission date, usually in March or April. Part of the assessment includes the faculty advisor's estimation of whether the student meets, exceeds, or does not meet department standards for normal progress through the program. Faculty advisors must submit their assessments to the graduate program assistant by the specified submission date, usually in March or April. All relevant communications (submission dates, reminders, etc.), will be sent via email by the Graduate Program Assistant to the graduate student and faculty listservs.

Other Faculty Assessments
The Graduate Committee collects additional information from all department faculty to identify students who are struggling in the program and to learn about all students' standing and progress. Thus, we ask that any faculty member who has worked with a student in the past year complete a faculty assessment. Faculty members should

assess students whom they have had in classes, have directed independent studies or guided research for, have had as teaching or research assistants, or have worked with in any other significant capacity.

Review Meeting
Using input from students, advisors, and other faculty members, the Graduate Committee will meet to identify struggling students. Any student who has received a B (or lower) in any class or a B+ in two or more classes, any student who has an overall GPA lower than 3.5, and any student identified by faculty members as not making satisfactory progress will be discussed. The faculty will then hold a review meeting to discuss those students and assemble feedback for them. The faculty members of the Graduate Committee will be present for all assessments; other faculty members will be invited to participate for those students with whom they have worked in any capacity.

Providing Feedback
Students who are progressing satisfactorily will receive an email notification to that effect.

The DGS will assemble feedback to be directed to the students identified, with an emphasis on areas in need of improvement and specific suggestions for how to work toward improvement in these areas. Following the annual review, the student's advisor will be expected to meet with the student to convey the findings by May 31st. For students who have been identified as struggling (a) in many different facets of graduate life, and/or (b) particularly in one specific area of the program requirements, the Graduate Committee, after consultation with the student's advisor, may choose to give the students directives for continuing in the graduate program. A probational status will come with a clear set of directives for improvement that the student will be expected to meet by the following annual review to stay in the program.

The directives will be spelled out in a Report with Directives for Continuing in the Graduate Program form. Copies of the report must be sent via email to the faculty advisor, the DGS, and the Graduate Program Assistant, with the student retaining the original. If at the following review, the student has not made the necessary improvement, the DGS will recommend that the Graduate School dismiss the student from the program.

Major Milestone and Expectations
The following section provides the expectations and basic guidelines for each of the major milestones that are required to obtain a Ph.D. in the Department of Sociology. For further information, including detailed guidance documents, please visit the following link.

Specialty Areas Exams (Details subject to change...TBA)
The goals of the Specialty Areas Exam (formally, Comprehensive "Comps" Exams) are: (1) to demonstrate broad knowledge in two areas of sociology, as a way of showcasing expertise and preparedness to teach and conduct research in those areas; (2) to exhibit high-level writing and thinking skills to integrate and critically engage with broad literatures; and (3) to read deeply in a student's areas of interest working towards identifying a potential dissertation topic. Students may petition the Graduate Committee for exceptions to the guidelines based on their specific circumstances. See the "Specialty Areas Exam Guidelines" document for the most in-depth instructions. Further information about the committee formation, timeline, and grading are provided below.

Form Specialty Area Examination Committee (SAEC)
The student's specialty area examination committee (SAEC) administers the specialty area examination in Year 3. This SAEC consists of three members of the graduate faculty, chosen by the student in consultation with his or her primary faculty advisor. All members must be tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty of the Department of Sociology at CU Boulder and must hold current (regular or special) graduate faculty appointments. Students must advise the Graduate Committee of the members of their SAEC via the Graduate Program Assistant before the end of the spring semester of Year 2, and work with the SAEC to finalize a reading list. See the specialty areas examination guidelines document for more information.

Timeline for Specialty Area Exams
Specialty Areas Exams will be administered to students in good standing during two separate weeks in Year 3: (1) for students who have completed or in progress of completing 45 credit hours by the start of Fall Semester of Year 3, exams will be administered during the *third week of September*; (2) for students who have completed 45 credit hours by the start of Spring semester of Year 3, exams will be administered during the *third week of February*. The exact date of administration will be determined by the student and primary faculty advisor. Students will have seven days to complete their final answers and return them to their SACEC.

Assessment of Specialty Areas Exams
The SAEC will have on average 4-6 weeks to read and evaluate your answers. The individual faculty members of the SAEC evaluate each of the answers separately and also assign an overall evaluation. The final evaluation is decided after each reviewing faculty member shares their evaluations with each other and discusses the student's answers. Specific feedback on individual answers is not usually shared with the student unless the overall evaluation is either a "revise and resubmit" or a "fail."

Evaluation options include:

High Pass	Exceptional Answers (e.g., top 10%)
Pass	Satisfactory Answers (majority of students)
Revise and Resubmit (R&R)	Clear Limitations identified and must be addressed in a revised document
Fail	Unsatisfactory Answers

Publishable Paper
The "Publishable Paper" requirement is intended to give students extensive practice with the research process and result in a submission to a scholarly journal for possible peer-reviewed publication. The "Publishable Paper" requirements are:

1. Students must demonstrate that they can ask sociological research questions and/or articulate hypotheses, motivate these questions or hypotheses using sociological literature, and answer them using competent analysis of empirical data.
2. Students must demonstrate that they can accurately apply sociological theory and use relevant methods in a research project of their choosing.
3. Ideally, this paper will, with some additional work, result in a sole-authored publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal of the student's choosing. Should the paper require more extensive revisions, it might also result in a future co-authored publication with a faculty member, fellow graduate student, or other collaborator(s).
4. Through these competencies, the student should demonstrate that they will be ready to write a sociological doctoral dissertation.

Guidelines and Expectations for the "Publishable Paper"
- Responsibility of the Student. The topic, framing, and approach need to be the student's own ideas, and the paper should be the student's own work. We define this as independently generating research questions, theorizing and/or summarizing relevant literature to the questions; analyzing data; and writing the paper. With advice from their primary faculty advisor, the student should identify two additional tenured or tenure-track Sociology faculty members to serve on the Publishable Paper Committee (PPC).

- **Role of the Advisor.** The advisor should help the student clarify their thoughts, but make sure this paper represents the student's own thinking and skills. A suggestion for the early stages of the project is for the advisor to ask the student to bring a one-page memo detailing the topic, framing, and analytic approach that the advisor can then talk through with the student. This memo should, ideally, be shared with the advisor during Year 3 of the program.

As the paper progresses, the advisor should meet regularly with the student to support the writing process and should be willing to read and comment on one or more drafts. Both the student and the advisor should provide sufficient turnaround time for reading drafts and making revisions. Students may also want to workshop their paper in one of the departmental workshops to receive additional feedback on the work.

Advisors and others can provide some editing support in the reading of the drafts, but the paper should not be so heavily edited or rewritten that it no longer reflects the student's voice, writing style, or original thoughts. The advisor should help the student understand how to conduct and interpret analyses more generally but cannot help them analyze their specific data or write the paper. It is permissible to collaborate to eventually co-author the paper after it has been submitted and evaluated as the student's own "Publishable Paper" submission.

- **Previous research projects.** It is permissible for students to use writing and analysis from earlier course papers for the "Publishable Paper." However, reusing a previous master's thesis or an existing manuscript written to obtain a degree prior to entering CU is not permitted. If a student would like to use the data from that work for their "Publishable Paper" project, they must conduct a different analysis of the same data.

- **Theory and analysis.** The paper needs to incorporate relevant theory and literature to justify asking one or more sociological research questions and/or articulating hypotheses, as well as analyze original or secondary empirical data using an appropriate method for the question(s). It must be original work that contributes to sociological theory and/or empirics (it can also contribute to other fields).

- **Writing support.** Students are supported in the paper writing process through two optional mechanisms that provide both time and money. The first is summer funding after Year 3 for the student to work on their "Publishable Paper". The second is a three-credit "Publishable Paper" course offered in the Fall Semester of Year 4 as designated time for students to work on their paper, with a rough draft due in mid-December and recommended deadlines throughout the semester for turning in sections of the draft.

- **Formatting.** The paper must be a minimum of 8,000 words and a maximum of 12,000 words, including references, tables, figures, and appendices. This length requirement mirrors typical standards in the field. It is important that the paper be clearly written, appropriately and consistently formatted, and free of typographical errors. A target journal does not need to be identified, but it may be helpful to have such a journal in mind to help focus on a potential audience and a desired style.

- **Submission guidelines.** Students should include a cover sheet that includes the paper's title, their name, and the name of faculty who served as their "Publishable Paper" advisor and Publishable Paper Committee members.

- **Due dates.** Due dates are December 31 or February 15. Papers must be submitted in Word or PDF format via email to both (1) the Graduate Program Assistant who will confirm receipt and (2) faculty members of their Publishable Paper Committee. The student chooses which date to submit the paper, and review should take about one to two months.

Review, Feedback, and Evaluation Guidelines for "Publishable Paper"
- **Process.** After submission, the advisor and the other faculty members of the PPC evaluates the paper; the advisor and each of the faculty members of the PPC will provide a two- to five-page journal-style review to the student. They will also submit a confidential grading decision to the graduate committee based on a standard score sheet. In addition, each reviewer should indicate whether they think the paper is ready to be

submitted to an academic journal. The advisor should also indicate how many drafts of the paper they have read and how many they offered to read.

Evaluation options include:

High Pass*	This designation is reserved for truly exceptional work that the PPC views as ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in sociology (e.g., *Social Forces* or *Social Problems)* or a peer-reviewed specialty journal (e.g., *Demography* or *Gender & Society*).
Pass*	This designation is for papers that clearly meet, and in some cases even exceed, the requirements identified in this document.
Revise and Resubmit (R&R) **	Papers that have failed to meet one or more of the requirements identified in the "Publishable Paper" guidelines will receive an R&R designation.
Fail***	This designation is for papers that are plagiarized, are substantially incomplete, have not satisfactorily addressed R&R comments, have major flaws, and/or have failed to address very serious concerns raised by the advisor and/or faculty reviewers.

* If a student receives a "High Pass" or "Pass" from the PPC, they are to meet with their advisor to discuss next steps for preparing the manuscript for journal submission.

** Papers receiving an R&R will not pass unless they are improved, and they must be revised and resubmitted within *two months* of receipt using the same submission guidelines described above. The student will receive a list of points that must be addressed in the revision, with PPC members taking care to ensure that the required revisions can be adequately completed within two months' time. The student's advisor will hold a meeting to discuss the revision requirements with the student, but the revisions must be the student's own work. The same PPC will review the resubmitted paper, with the options of "High Pass," "Pass," or Fail."
*** A Fail decision will trigger a substantial review of the student's standing in the program, resulting in a decision either (a) for the DGS to submit to the Graduate School that the student leave the program at the end of the Academic Year (i.e., conclusion of spring semester), or (b) to create a specific set of directives that the student must meet in the following year in order to remain in the program.

Dissertation
The dissertation is the culmination of the work you've done throughout your time in the program. It is the final milestone to pass to complete the requirements for the Ph.D. degree. This section provides further details into the dissertation process, including the writing of the proposal/prospects, its defense and what the journey to submitting and defining and final dissertation project looks like. Please see the Dissertation Guidelines document for more details.

Forming the Dissertation Committee
The student must work with their primary faculty advisor to form a committee composed of five tenure-track faculty members. The student must designate one member as the committee chair (usually primary faculty advisor), or two members as co-chairs. One "outside" member (i.e., non-Sociology tenure-track faculty) may co-chair, but not chair, a committee. The composition of the committee should be as follows:

- At least three members (chair included) must hold tenured or tenure-track regular graduate faculty appointments in the Department of Sociology at CU Boulder.

- A fourth member may be tenured or tenure-track regular graduate faculty from (a) the Department of Sociology, (b) another department on campus, or (c) off campus.
  - For off-campus faculty, the Graduate Program Assistant will process the necessary graduate faculty appointment under a special category.
- A fifth member is designated as an "outside" member and may be from another department on campus, or from off campus. This person must hold a current graduate faculty appointment from a department outside the Department of Sociology.
  - Students may, with the approval of the dissertation committee chair, add a sixth member if the addition is consistent with Graduate School policy.

The Graduate Committee must approve the composition of the dissertation committee before the student begins work on the dissertation. The student should provide the names, and primary or secondary designations, if used, to the Graduate Program Assistant via email to obtain final approval.

Dissertation Proposal/Prospectus
The proposal should offer a working outline of the project, developed prior to the defense and in concert with the chair and the primary committee members. Formats vary widely, but proposals typically range between 30 and 60 pages long (excluding tables and references).

In general, a proposal should establish the topic(s) under investigation, demonstrate mastery of relevant literature, and state the organizing research questions that have arisen thus far. It should also clearly identify and present the methods and/or analytical techniques to be used in the research, keeping in mind that the need for additional or alternative strategies might arise as the research progresses.

A timetable/ timeline is often a useful thing to draft and include in the proposal to help the student as well as the committee, but given the unpredictability of research, this, too, might be subject to change. In short, no specific requirements for a prospectus can apply to every project. Exact formatting expectations should be discussed and finalized with your dissertation committee chair. For more information about the dissertation proposal, click here. Recommended Timeline*:*
- Students must write a dissertation proposal and orally defend it before the dissertation committee by the end of Year 5. The dissertation must be completed and defended within a reasonable time after Year 5.
- All defenses, including the proposal and final dissertation defense, are to be held during the academic year (fall/spring semesters).
  - In rare instances, a student may petition the graduate committee for an exception to this rule and the petition must be endorsed by all faculty on the respective committee.
  - Please use the "Defense Scheduling Petition" form in these cases.

Proposal/Prospectus Defense
Students must allow committee members at least two weeks before an oral defense to review the proposal and determine project suitability. Committee members may suggest changes during this time. A student may officially commence work on his or her dissertation project *only* after the committee has approved the proposal or a revised proposal with a majority vote.

However, it is not uncommon for such work to be well underway (for example, as part of a course) at the time of the proposal/prospectus defense. The "Dissertation Proposal Defense Report" must be completed, signed, and emailed to the Graduate Program Assistant after a successful defense. An approved proposal is a contract between the committee and the student, who can expect to receive a PhD only if he or she fulfills the proposal's objectives and successfully defends the dissertation.

Dissertation Research, Writing, and Defense
Students should spend time in Year 5 and beyond conducting research and writing their dissertation. The dissertation defense must be scheduled by the posted Graduate School deadline to orally defend the dissertation for graduation in the semester the degree is to be conferred. Keep in mind, there are enrollment requirements if a defense takes place during a summer term.

It is common practice that primary committee members read chapters or sections of the dissertation in progress and provide feedback. Secondary members may elect to read only the last draft, but the committee member(s) and the student may negotiate this.

The Graduate School's requirements for the written dissertation appear in Thesis and Dissertation Specifications, posted on the Graduate School website here. These guidelines must be followed for your dissertation submission to be accepted by the Graduate School.

Dissertation Defense
Once the student and the committee agree on a date and time for the dissertation defense, it is the student's responsibility to reserve a room and to notify the Graduate Program Assistant of the exact details at least three weeks in advance. Such details include the names and designations of committee members, the date, time, and location of the defense. Students can hold their dissertation defense via Zoom, subject to committee approval.

The PhD dissertation defense is a public event, and any student or faculty member may attend. According to Graduate School rules, all committee members must participate in the defense, with the mode of participation (e.g., in person, remotely) defined by the committee and approved by the department. At least four committee members must evaluate the defense as satisfactory for the student to pass. A committee can (and usually does) require dissertation revisions even if the candidate passes the defense.

Candidates who fail the defense will have a second opportunity to defend. The committee must specify what the candidate should do to prepare. Candidates must redefend within a timeframe as determined by the committee (typically within one semester or one academic year). The department has no obligation to give the student a third chance to defend the dissertation.

In the case that a student fails the dissertation defense, they may reconfigure the dissertation committee partially or completely. The student will be required to redefend the dissertation proposal, and the time between the first defense and a subsequent defense must be at least eight weeks.

As general practice, students should refer to the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Specifications to remain up to date on the requirements for successfully completing the dissertation process. This information is available here.

MA Degree Options and Allowable Circumstances
The Department of Sociology does not have a separate M.A. degree program. However, students may obtain an M.A. degree in Sociology in transit to the Ph.D. if they wish, and students who will not be completing the Ph.D. requirements may pursue a terminal M.A. degree, pending approval by the Graduate Committee. The Department does not allow extra time for the completion of the M.A. degree.

When a student elects to take an MA, it can be accomplished via submitting a specialty area exam or a passing "Publishable Paper." All MA students must complete a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate-level credit. These 30 hours must include the required sociology seminars listed above. The 30 hours must also include at least six semester hours in at least two other sociology seminars or via an independent study. These may not be substituted for required seminars.

Finally, all students must designate an M.A. Advisory Committee. This Committee must consist of at least three regularly appointed graduate faculty members from the Department of Sociology. Students select the members of the Committee and designate one as Chair. A candidate may, with the approval of the Chair of the Advisory Committee, place additional members on the Committee consistent with the rules of the Graduate School. Students must report the composition of the Committee to the Graduate Program Assistant, who will then submit the list to the Graduate Committee for approval. Committees do not have official standing until approved by Graduate Committee.

Steps involved in the M.A. process are:

1. Graduate Students wishing to earn either a terminal or "along the way" Master of Arts degree (M.A.) must first petition the Graduate Committee. This petition consists of a letter indicating the student's reason(s) for obtaining an M.A. degree and, if relevant, stating why the student wishes to discontinue their pursuit of the Ph.D. The student's primary faculty advisor must support this petition by sending a letter or email to the DGS.

2. The student must list the three members of the M.A. Advisory Committee. Only one member may be from outside the department. If the student is submitting their "Publishable Paper" via the exam option (see below), the Advisory Committee is often composed of the faculty who served on their PPC. If the student is pursuing a terminal M.A. degree via the exam option after having received a "fail" on their specialty area exams, the Advisory Committee is often composed of the faculty who served on their SCEC.

3. The Graduate Committee will then review the petition. The DGS or the Graduate Program Assistant will notify the student of the review.

4. After the Graduate Committee notifies the student, they must then complete the master's graduation paperwork. This paperwork will be available from the Graduate Program Assistant.

5. The student must submit a candidacy application, and the department will fill out the final exam form. Paperwork can be found [here](#).

6. The Chair of the student's M.A. Advisory Committee needs to submit a final grade card after the defense or exam. Students are responsible for meeting the deadlines posted on the [Graduate School website](#) (including applying for graduation via BuffPortal).

Non-Thesis/Exam Option
Under the Non-Thesis/ Exam Option students must complete 30 hours of course work at the 5000 level or above (including the required courses) and take a written exam in their major area within sociology. The Advisory Committee, constituted as an examining committee, creates an Exam that will assess the candidate's mastery of knowledge within his or her specialty area(s) of sociology. The Exam ("exam") option is similar to the Specialty Areas Exam, but it is shorter and more limited in scope and content. Indeed, the MA Exam "exam" is to be shorter and less comprehensive than the Specialty Area Examinations. The exam can also be administered in the form of an article manuscript, and most students simply submit their "Publishable Paper" as their MA Exam "paper."

The Committee, in concert with the student, determines whether there will be an oral defense of the Exam, whether it be a discussion of the student's "exam" answers and/or a presentation of the student's "paper."

If more than one committee member votes against passing, the candidate fails the Exam. Candidates who fail will have a second opportunity to take the Exam. The committee must specify what the candidate should do in preparation for the second version of the Exam. If the candidate fails the second time, the Department of Sociology has no obligation to provide another opportunity.

Students wishing to earn an M.A. are responsible for meeting deadlines posted here.

Thesis Option
The graduate school offers a "Thesis" option as a route to obtain a master's degree. However, the department does not require or encourage students to follow this route. More information can be found on the Graduate School website, here.

University Employment: Titles and Expectations
Most students receive financial support by serving as teaching assistants (TAs), which are employment positions in the CU Boulder Graduate School. Graduate students in good standing are eligible for graduate TA positions. Teaching assistantships and Graduate Part-Time Instructor positions, as well as research appointments, are awarded by the Department of Sociology or other campus units, but the work contract is with the CU Boulder Graduate School.

Each semester, you will be asked to fill out a teaching survey to assess your funding needs and teaching interests. When completing the graduate teaching survey, be sure to note your anticipated scheduling conflicts, especially any classes you plan to take that semester. If you inform us of your conflicts only after we have started announcing teaching assignments, we will try to accommodate you but may not be able to do so. If you do not get one of your teaching preferences, please do not take this personally or read it as any sort of demotion. We are not able to give everyone their top choice. We do try as much as possible to take your preferences into account.

The department will also use feedback from annual reviews, students' standing in the program (i.e., adequate progress), and career stage/trajectory to prioritize students' funding beyond Year 6.
Historically, we have often been able to offer TA positions and/or GPTI positions to students beyond Year 6, but this varies from semester to semester depending on teaching needs, student enrollments, and college decisions about GPTI positions.
Situations sometimes arise, particularly those of a medical nature, which prevent students from completing TA or GPTI assignments. Students facing such circumstances should inform the DGS and the Graduate Program Assistant as early as possible to discuss potential accommodations or alternative arrangements.

Teaching Assistantships (TA)
TAs work with faculty members to teach undergraduate classes. The number of undergraduate students a TA is responsible for in any given teaching assignment can range from 35 to 100. Teaching assistants lead weekly recitations, grade assignments, photocopy exams or other course materials, scan readings, maintain communication with the course instructor and enrolled students, and perform other class-related tasks.

Depending on the type of appointment and the percentage time involved, TAs may receive tuition waivers for a specified number of credit hours. Such appointments are contingent on adequate progress in the program as described in the section "Demonstrate Adequate Progress."

Students may hold appointments in more than one department. However, all appointments may not exceed 50 percent per semester (i.e., 20 hours per week, on average). Under certain circumstances, a student may obtain an appointment greater than 50 percent with the prior approval of their advisor and have submitted a "Petition for Graduate Student Overload Appointment" form to the Graduate School. The maximum overload percentage allowed is 62.5 percent (i.e., 25 hours per week, on average).

Research Assistantships (RA)
The department encourages graduate students to pursue opportunities for funded research wherever possible. The department website features a link to potential funding sources, and students should work closely with faculty advisors and student mentors to locate other sources of financial support. The department supports the efforts of

other university units in which students may seek financial support for their research. Several of these are located within the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS), which houses multidisciplinary research programs in the social and behavioral sciences. Details are available on the IBS website.

Graduate Part-Time Instructor (GPTI)
Advanced students may be eligible to teach their own course as a Graduate Part-Time Instructor (GPTI). Students who have previously taught as GPTIs can also be assigned TA positions in the future, depending on the department's needs and the number of GPTI positions made available by the College of Arts and Sciences. In other words, having had a GPTI assignment in a past semester does not guarantee a GPTI assignment in the future.

A General Note About Funding
The department's top priority is to fund all enrolled graduate students who are in good standing in Years 1-6 of the PhD program and who do not have other sources of funding in a given semester (e.g., an RA position or a fellowship). However, please understand that the College of Arts and Sciences, not the department, makes the final decision about teaching positions and that the Graduate School controls students' enrollment in the university. So, the department will continue to do everything it can to implement the aforementioned policies, but it can ultimately be overruled by the Graduate School and/or college.

For all PhD students, the total number of semesters of teaching support is 12 semesters, not including summers. Beyond 12 semesters, teaching assignments are granted only if the department has available positions. In other words, positions are guaranteed only through Year 6.

Changes in Student Availability
We aim to assign graduate students to TA and GPTI positions a semester in advance so that graduate students and faculty can adequately prepare for the semester, the department can ensure adequate funding for graduate students, and the department can allocate teaching positions to best meet department needs as well as accommodate student and faculty preferences.

Last-minute changes to TA and GPTI assignments undermine these goals, risk our ability to maintain a strong undergraduate curriculum, and cost extensive staff time. Therefore, once teaching contracts are signed, graduate students are expected to fulfill the agreed-upon obligations. If a graduate student wishes to vacate their assigned teaching position, they should contact the Undergraduate Chair and Graduate Chair immediately to discuss the situation. The student is expected to fulfill their commitment until a suitable replacement can be found. Within four weeks of the start of the semester, graduate students are expected to not vacate their teaching positions except in the case of a medical emergency or other serious and unexpected circumstance that makes the teaching assignment untenable.

Feedback and Reporting Mechanisms
To report concerns of any kind, you may use the anonymous form on the front of the Sociology Department website.

Graduate Committee: There are two annually elected graduate student representatives on the Graduate Committee. You can find out more information about your representatives by visiting the following link.

Town Halls: Each semester the Graduate Committee schedules a Town Hall meeting to update students about current developments in the department. These are also occasions when students are encouraged to ask questions or discuss any concerns. The Town Halls will be announced on GradSocy.

University Reporting Mechanisms and Confidential Resources (including the Ombuds Office, the Office of Victims Assistance, and Counseling and Psychiatric Services), can be found here.

Further Graduate Student Resources

In this section, you will find hyperlinks to useful university resources. The Department Website also hosts many useful resources, including specific guidance for the specialty area exams, dissertation proposals, and lists of grant/fellowships and other funding sources, which can be found here.

Commencement	*Disability Services*
Financial Aid Office	*Graduate School*
Graduate School Forms	*Graduate Student Grievance Process & Procedures*
Graduate Teaching Program (GPT)	*In-State Tuition (Establishing Residency)*
Registrar's Office	*Transcript Ordering*
Bursar's Office: Tuition and Fees	*Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG)*
VPN Setup	*Writing Center*
Student Affairs: Confidential Resources	*Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)*