

**Handbook**

**Graduate Program in Sociology**

**Department of Sociology**  
**University of Colorado at Boulder**

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## ***Introduction***

This document summarizes relevant policies for the graduate program in the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder. Graduate students are subject to the rules described in the handbook that are in effect at the time of their admission to the program. Although the handbook is updated annually, some policies will undoubtedly change or become refined, and the graduate program assistant will keep track of such changes and post important changes online as handbook addenda.

Periodically, essential information will appear on *gradsocy@lists.colorado.edu*, the department email list for graduate students. Much official business of the university transpires via email. Thus, all enrolled graduate students must have an email address on the Colorado.edu domain and check their email often, responding to any requests or inquiries in a timely fashion.

## ***Graduate Program***

The graduate program in the Department of Sociology at CU Boulder seeks to train creative and productive scholars and teachers. For more information and to download a copy of this handbook, please visit [www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students](http://www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students).

## ***Graduate Degrees Offered***

The Department of Sociology offers graduate training leading to a PhD. To the greatest extent possible, the program seeks to:

- provide mentoring through one-on-one faculty-student relationships, as well as by teams of mentors
- give students clear and informed feedback on progress toward their degrees
- socialize students into the norms of the profession by informing them about professional expectations and practices not traditionally covered in seminars
- train students to become competent teachers and researchers
- provide sound training in theory and methods

The department does not maintain a separate MA program and does not encourage applications from students who wish to pursue an MA in sociology as a terminal degree. However, there are three scenarios by which students may earn the MA degree:

- Students already making satisfactory progress toward the PhD may wish to receive the MA as a sign of progress toward the PhD, particularly in conjunction with submitting the third-year paper. To do so, students must meet the MA degree requirements outlined later in this handbook.
- Students making satisfactory progress toward the PhD may wish to receive the MA as a terminal degree when changes in their circumstances (e.g., change in career plans, relocation, family situations, etc.) result in their inability to meet PhD degree requirements. Students wishing to pursue this option must first petition the Graduate Committee and receive approval to do so.  
If circumstances change and such students choose to return to the graduate program within two years of receiving the MA, the department will readmit them.
- Students whose progress toward the PhD is below expectations can work toward the MA as a terminal degree after petitioning the Graduate Committee and receiving approval. If, in the future, they wish to pursue the PhD in this department, they must reapply for admission to the PhD program.

Detailed information on the requirements for the MA degree appear later in this handbook.

### ***Admission to the Program***

The graduate program admits students only for a fall start. Completed applications must be submitted online by December 1. Prospective students must apply for admission to the Department of Sociology. The department forwards all accepted applications to the Office of Admissions for further processing. 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 usually requires students who are admitted provisionally to complete 12 credit hours of graduate work with a GPA of 3.0 or better during the first year. The department may require a student to fulfill additional requirements for provisional acceptance.

### ***Transfer of Credit***

In accordance with Graduate School policy, the department accepts a maximum of 21 graduate level credit hours from another college or university toward fulfillment of the requirements of the PhD degree. Students may submit requests for transfer of credit only after completing 6 credits of graduate level course work on the CU Boulder campus with a 3.0 GPA. Transferred credits do not reduce the minimum registration requirements but may reduce the amount of formal course work required. The department may recommend to the Graduate School dean that a maximum of 9 graduate level credit hours from another college or university apply toward the requirements of the MA degree for those students who plan to receive the terminal MA or the MA in progress. Students wishing to transfer credit toward the MA degree must first complete a satisfactory record of performance during at least one semester in residence. In summary, students may transfer 21 credit hours for the PhD and 9 credit hours for the MA.

Request for transfer of credit forms are submitted to the graduate chair for consideration and are available from the graduate program coordinator. A student intending to transfer credits – including those coming from universities within the CU system – must meet with his or her faculty advisor to determine the suitability of particular courses for transfer of credit. The advisor may consult other faculty members as needed and will make a recommendation to the graduate chair regarding credit transfer. The final decision rests with the department and the Graduate School.

Note: Students may claim transfer credit only for approved courses when applying for candidacy.

### ***Waiver Policy for Required Courses***

The Graduate Committee does not usually grant waivers for required courses on the basis of graduate course work completed elsewhere.

Required courses include:

- Logics of Qualitative Inquiry (SOCY 5181)

- Research Design (SOCY 5031)
- Sociological Theory (SOCY 5201)
- Contemporary Theory (SOCY 7171)
- Data 1/Quantitative Methods 1 (SOCY 5111)
- Data 2/Quantitative Methods 2 (SOCY 6111)

Students who believe that they have completed courses of equivalent depth and rigor elsewhere may submit a petition requesting a waiver of one or more of these requirements. The petition must include a brief letter explaining why the student wishes to waive the requirement, as well as copies of syllabi, written work, and final grades from the previous course work. These materials should be submitted to the graduate program assistant for review by the graduate chair 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 make a decision 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.

### ***Advising System***

Each incoming student will be assigned an individual faculty advisor who will help guide the student through the first year of the program. Under the first-year advising system, students are encouraged to work with their first-year advisors to explore the program, the research specialties of the department, and their own developing research interests while getting to know faculty members. Once a student has had an opportunity to meet and work with the faculty, decisions regarding long-term advisors should be made following the first-year experience.

Usually beginning in the second year of the program, graduate students are expected to seek their own faculty advisors. Only members of the graduate faculty of the Department of Sociology or those specifically appointed by the Graduate Committee can act as advisors to graduate students. Although students find advisors in many different 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. Once a faculty member agrees to serve in the role of advisor, the student should notify the graduate program assistant in writing or by email. Students should then work with their advisors to select other faculty members to serve on comprehensive examination and dissertation committees.

Students may change advisors at any time and are responsible for informing the graduate program assistant and the affected faculty of any changes.

### ***Demonstrating Adequate Progress***

Students must meet the following minimum requirements to demonstrate adequate progress:

- maintaining a grade point average of at least 3.0 in all course work attempted and no incompletes
- completing the course work equivalent of the preliminary exams by the end of the second program year (as described in the section, ***Overview of Requirements for the PhD Degree***)
- satisfactory annual reviews
- fulfilling the third-year paper requirement by the end of the third year in the program
- passing the specialty area comprehensive exam by the conclusion of the fourth program year
- registering continuously for at least 5 dissertation credit hours every fall and spring semester beginning the semester after passing the specialty area comprehensive exam and extending through the academic term (including summer) the dissertation is successfully defended
- passing the dissertation proposal defense by the end of the fifth program year
- completing the requirements for the doctoral degree within the six-year time limit

### ***Teaching Assistantships***

Most students receive financial support by serving as teaching assistants (TAs). Graduate students in good standing are eligible for graduate teaching assistantships. Teaching assistantships and instructorships, as well as research appointments, are awarded by the Department of Sociology or other campus units.



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

Students may hold appointments in more than one department. However, the total of all appointments may not exceed 50 percent.

Under certain circumstances, a student may obtain an appointment greater than 50 percent with the prior approval of his or her advisor, submitting a Petition for Graduate Student Overload Appointment form to the Graduate School. The form is available on the Graduate School web page for funding administration under the heading, Graduate Student Appointment Information, [www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/funding/funding-administration](http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/funding/funding-administration). The student's faculty advisor should email the completed overload petition to the Graduate School, copying the graduate program assistant and the department's payroll liaison. The maximum overload percentage allowed is 62.5 percent.

Advanced students may teach their own courses as graduate part-time instructors (GPTIs). However, students who have taught as GPTIs can be assigned TA positions in the future, depending on the department's needs. In other words, having a GPTI assignment one semester does not guarantee the same assignment the next semester.

For all PhD students, regardless of whether they receive the masters' degree at CU or elsewhere, 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 them available.

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 graduate

chair and the graduate program assistant as early as possible to discuss potential accommodations or alternative arrangements.

#### *Process for Making Teaching Assignments*

The undergraduate chair makes teaching assignments, and the payroll liaison issues letters informing students of their assignments. Students receive this notification in as timely a manner as possible before the beginning of each semester, usually at the end of the preceding academic term. Every student offered an assistantship must sign a letter of offer, which serves as a binding contract, accepting the appointment. A student who receives an assistantship in one academic year is not guaranteed an assistantship in subsequent years. Teaching assignments in all years of enrollment in the program are based on department needs and enrollment levels. The department generally does not grant assistantships beyond a graduate student's sixth year in the program. However, assistantships may be considered if employment opportunities are available.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances as determined by the undergraduate and/or graduate chair, the following criteria generally are used in making teaching assignments (established by the Graduate Student Association 12/09/98):

- *Progress toward Degree*

Students who have met the minimum requirements for the program (see the section, ***Demonstrating Adequate Progress***) will be included in the pool of applicants for teaching positions. The department will consider extenuating circumstances for those who have not met the minimum requirements. The department undergraduate chair makes the final decision on assignments.

- *Matching Course Requests to Availability*

The department will match these as best it can. Students will **not** be eliminated from the pool if there is not a match.

- *Expertise in Area*  
Includes papers, research, and courses taken at the graduate level. This category takes into account different stages in the program.
- *Teaching Experience*  
Courses prepared and taught already. This reduces work for the instructor and helps to refine the quality of the course with each subsequent term taught.
- *Teaching Quality*  
Determined using ratings from Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQs).
- *Written Professional Projects*  
Includes published articles, manuscripts under review, conference presentations, and awards/honors for written work.
- *Cumulative GPA*  
Maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA in all graduate course work.
- *Year in Program*  
Students beyond year six in the program may not receive a teaching assignment.

Summer teaching positions are made available according to the department's needs. Typically, only GPTI positions are available for summer teaching. The department staff works with the undergraduate chair to announce available courses, take requests, and make these assignments in late spring.

### ***Research Assistantships***

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 mentors to locate other sources. 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 represents a multidisciplinary effort among researchers in the social and behavioral sciences. Details are available on the IBS website, [www.colorado.edu/IBS/](http://www.colorado.edu/IBS/).

### ***Overview of Requirements for the PhD Degree***

The following overview outlines program requirements and provides deadlines for meeting them. The Graduate Committee recognizes that students entering the program with an MA degree could move through the program more quickly than others, and that differences among students may affect individual courses of study. Students needing exceptions to the rules outlined or extensions to the established deadlines should refer to the section, ***Graduate Student Petitions***, at the end of the handbook.

Students should aim to fulfill the requirements for the PhD within five to six years. Degree requirements include the following:

- ***Time Limit***

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. Under extenuating circumstances, starting in the sixth year, a graduate student and his or her advisor may request by letter an extension of the time limit. This letter, accompanied by a statement from the advisor supporting the request, should go to the Graduate Committee and the graduate program assistant. If the letter is approved, the graduate chair will forward the request to the dean of the Graduate School.

- *Minimum Course Hours and Levels*

Students must complete a total of 45 hours of course work credit hours (which can include independent study courses or guided research). At least 24 hours 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 be letter graded rather than pass/fail.

- *Successful Completion of Required Seminars*

- Logics of Qualitative Inquiry (SOCY 5181)
- Research Design (SOCY 5031)
- Sociological Theory (SOCY 5201)
- Contemporary Theory (SOCY 7171)
- Data 1/Quantitative Methods 1 (SOCY 5111)
- Data 2/Quantitative Methods 2 (SOCY 6111)

*Note on waiver of required seminars:* The department generally does not allow waivers of the required courses. See the section, ***Waiver Policy for Required Courses***, for additional information.

- *Completing the Equivalent of "Preliminary Exams"*

Satisfactory completion of the required classes during the first two years in the program represents what the Graduate School refers to as the "preliminary examination." The criterion for satisfactory completion of the required courses is a grade of B-. Although a B- is a passing grade, any student receiving a B- in a required course must meet with the graduate chair to assess his or her progress. Additionally, a student earning less than a B- in a required course must retake the course as directed by the Graduate Committee. Failure to pass the second time will result in dismissal from the PhD program. A student may then, with approval from the Graduate Committee, work toward a terminal MA.

- *Successful Annual Reviews*

Department faculty members conduct a review of all students, with a particular focus on students in years one through three, every spring. See the section, ***Annual Review and Report***, for more information.

- *Fulfilling the Third-year Paper Requirement*

Please refer to the section, ***Complete Third-year Paper***, below.

- *Passing the Specialty Area Comprehensive Exam*

Students should take this exam no later than the second full week of August after their fourth program year. Students must complete the required 45 hours of course work before taking the specialty area comprehensive exam. Details are provided under the heading, *Minimum Course Hours and Levels*, earlier in this section. The student and the specialty area comprehensive exam committee set the exam date and time, as explained in the section, ***Years Three and Four***.

- *Successful Defense of Dissertation Proposal*

Students should prepare a written dissertation proposal and orally defend it before the dissertation committee by the end of their fifth program year. For details, refer to the section, ***Years Five and Six***.

- *Completion and Successful Defense of the Dissertation*

Students should complete dissertation research and defend by the end of the sixth program year and by the posted Graduate School deadline for orally defending the dissertation for graduation the semester the degree is to be conferred. Students should refer to the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Specifications, available at [www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/thesis-and-dissertation-specifications](http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/thesis-and-dissertation-specifications).

Additional information appears in the section, ***Years Five and Six***.

### ***Sequence Through Program***

The following is a typical sequence through the program:

#### ***Enter Graduate Program***

Students typically focus on required courses during the first year, though there are also opportunities to take an elective seminar in each semester.

#### ***Preregistration for Graduate Students***

All graduate students should register as soon as possible after receiving registration materials. 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. Students who register late may incur financial penalties and will 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.

### ***Years One and Two***

#### ***Required Seminars***

Graduate students are expected to take two or three seminars each semester. We recommend that first-year students consult with the graduate chair and/or their first-year faculty advisors to determine whether two or three seminars will serve the students best in their first year. Advice will depend on prior course work, familiarity with statistics, methods, and theory, prior teaching experience, and additional responsibilities outside of graduate school. Beyond the first year, we recommend that students take three courses each semester.

### *Year One Required Courses*

- SOCY 5031 (3 credits) Research Design
- SOCY 5111 (3 credits) Data 1/Quantitative Methods 1
- SOCY 5181 (3 credits) Logics of Qualitative Inquiry
- SOCY 5201 (3 credits) Sociological Theory

### *Year Two/Three Required Courses*

- SOCY 6111 (3 credits) Data 2/Quantitative Methods 2
- SOCY 7171 (3 credits) Contemporary Theory

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 as described in the section, ***Graduate Student Petitions***, at the end of the handbook.

### *Department/Limited Credit Seminars*

- SOCY 6821 (1 credit) Graduate Sociology Forum 1  
Students in their first year are required to attend the Graduate Sociology Forum. Students will meet bimonthly throughout the academic year with the forum leader. The primary purposes of the forum are to introduce faculty members and their research to the first-year cohort and to provide a communal forum for the cohort to discuss issues of concern with the forum leader.
- SOCY 6851(2 credits) Interdisciplinary professional socialization seminar  
This interdisciplinary seminar for the social sciences features weekly topics with guest speakers on various issues related to professional socialization. Students workshop professional socialization materials at the end of the semester. This course is not required and may be repeated once for credit.
- Graduate Professional Seminar (Not for credit)



The department offers an ongoing professionalization seminar (“Prosem”), led by a group of elected graduate students and the graduate chair. The Prosem meets approximately monthly and consists of sessions on topics chosen by students such as: developing your curriculum vitae (CV); working effectively with faculty mentors; staying on top of “the literature”; and understanding the academic job market. The Prosem is open to any interested students from any year in the program.

### *Grading Rubric for Course Work*

Faculty members who teach required graduate seminars (theory and methods) are asked to use this 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 well above expectations for the course

A-: Performs above expectations for the course

B+: Meets expectations for the course

B: Occasionally performs below expectations for the course

B-: Consistently performs below expectations for the course

C range: Unsatisfactory work for a PhD student (student not completing work, not attending class, etc.). Instructor has serious concerns regarding student progress toward degree.

*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+.

### *Maintaining Full-time Student Status*

To maintain full-time registration status, students must meet one of the following criteria:

- Enroll in elective seminars for a minimum of 5 credit hours per semester for full-time status in the program.
- Take at least 1 doctoral dissertation credit after completing required course work and prior to passing the specialty area comprehensive exam. Students must keep in mind that registering for 1 dissertation hour will make them full time only in an academic sense. The TIAA-CREF regulations require students to register for at least 3 hours to receive a waiver from the student retirement plan. If a student holding a university appointment registers for only 1 dissertation hour, the university deducts a mandatory student retirement deduction from his or her payroll. In addition, under some circumstances, students may take dissertation credits before completing the specialty area comprehensive exam, but the Graduate Committee encourages students to complete the exam first.
- Take a minimum of 5 dissertation hours each fall and spring semester *after* passing the comprehensive exam. A student must be registered for at least 5 dissertation hours during the semester (including summer session) the dissertation defense is passed.
- Complete 30 credit hours (not including 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. Depending on availability, students may teach as GPTIs after completing 30 hours of course work.

### *Years Three and Four*

#### *Required Course Hours*

By the end of year four, students must have completed 45 hours of course work, with 24 in the department. Before taking the specialty area comprehensive exam and after completing course work, a student may enroll for 1 dissertation hour for full-time status. However, students must keep in mind that registering for 1 dissertation hour will make them full time only in an academic sense. The TIAA-CREF regulations require students to register for at least 3 dissertation hours to receive a waiver from the student retirement plan. If a student holding a university appointment registers for only 1

dissertation hour, the university deducts a mandatory student retirement deduction from his or her payroll.

After passing the specialty area comprehensive exam, students must enroll in a minimum of 3 to 5 dissertation hours to fulfill the continuous enrollment requirement. Students should be aware that enrolling in only 3 hours is considered part-time status, which is reserved for students not using campus facilities or resources.

### *Complete Third-year Paper*

All students are required to complete a theoretically informed empirical sociological article manuscript by the conclusion of their third year in the program. See the third-year paper guidelines released each year for more details. Students may choose to enroll in the third-year paper credits (3 credits) in the fall of their third year when working on writing their papers. Papers may be turned in by December 15 or March 1. Students may choose to submit in fall or spring and should let the graduate program assistant know when they intend to submit their paper. Students can analyze secondary data or collect their own data for analysis. Papers should be in the 8,000- to 10,000-word range (excluding references and tables).

The goals for the third-year paper requirement are:

- 1) Students will be required to demonstrate that they can ask sociological research questions or articulate hypotheses, motivate these questions or hypotheses using sociological literature, and answer them using competent analysis of empirical data.
- 2) Students will be required to demonstrate that they can competently apply sociological theory and methods to a research project of their choosing.
- 3) Ideally, this paper will, with some additional work, result in a sole-authored journal publication in a journal of the student's choosing.
- 4) Through these competencies, the student should demonstrate that within the next couple of years, they will be ready to write a sociological doctoral dissertation.

Students who would like to make more rapid progress may submit their paper prior to the third year.

With the approval of and in consultation with the student's advisor, a student entering with a Master's

thesis may use previously gathered data in developing a substantively and theoretically new paper of publishable quality for the third-year paper requirement. A previously completed master's thesis may not be used to satisfy the third-year paper requirement.

### *Third-year Paper Advising*

The topic, framing, and approach need to be the student's own ideas, and the paper should be the student's own work. This is defined as independently generating research questions, theorizing and/or bringing literature to bear on the questions, analyzing data, and writing the paper; it is permissible to collaborate in data preparation and to eventually coauthor the paper after it has been submitted as a third-year paper. The advisor should help the student clarify his or her thoughts but ensure that the paper represents the student's own thinking and skills.

Note: As a general rule, a faculty member should advise no more than one student per cohort.

### *Evaluating the Third-year Paper*

The student's faculty advisor and two blind reviewers will evaluate the third-year paper once it is submitted for approval. The paper will be evaluated using a pass/fail system. Under the current policy, the third-year paper requirement may not be waived.

Students may submit their completed third-year papers for evaluation by either of two deadlines: December 15 or March 1. Failure to meet the third-year paper requirement in the third year will result in dismissal from the program. A student may petition the Graduate Committee to request an extension past the spring semester of their third year when unusual extenuating circumstances exist. For details, refer to the section, ***Graduate Student Petitions***, at the end of the handbook.

Although students may begin preparing for the comprehensive area specialty exam (e.g., assembling a committee, developing reading lists, etc.), before meeting the third-year paper requirement, a passing grade on the third-year paper is required before a student can take the comprehensive exam.

Initial grading options are pass, fail, or revise and resubmit (R&R). Papers receiving an R&R must be revised and resubmitted within one month using the same submission guidelines as above. The standard for passing is that the paper meets the four goals articulated above.

### *Methods Training*

Students writing qualitative papers will be supported by graduate seminars in qualitative data collection (typically taken in fall of year two) and qualitative data analysis (typically taken in fall of year three). Students writing quantitative papers will be supported by Data 1/Quantitative-Methods 1 (typically taken in year one) and Data 2/Quantitative Methods 2 (typically taken in year two), and more advanced quantitative courses as available.

### **The Master's Degree Option**

The Department of Sociology does not have a separate Master's degree program. However, students may obtain the M.A. degree 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. Students may pursue the M.A. through **Plan I**, which involves a thesis, or **Plan II**, which requires an exam. Guidelines for each plan appear below. Regardless of the plan chosen, all M.A. students must complete a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate credit. These 30 hours must include the required Theory and Methods sequence (Intro to Social Statistics, Research Design, Sociological Theory, Contemporary Theory, Data Analysis, and Grad Forum).

The 30 hours must also include at least six semester hours in at least two sociology seminars. Students may take a maximum of 6 hours of independent study. These may not be substituted for required seminars. Finally, all M.A. students must designate a Master's 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:

1. Graduate Students wishing to do a terminal or en-route Master's Degree should first petition the Graduate Committee. This petition should consist of a letter indicating their reasons for obtaining a Master's Degree and, if relevant, stating why the student wishes to discontinue pursuing the Ph.D. This letter should also indicate whether the student will follow Plan I (Thesis option) or Plan II (exam option). The student's Advisor/Chair must support this petition by sending a letter or email to the Chair of the Graduate Committee.
2. The student should also list the three members of the Master's Advisory Committee. Only one member may be from outside the department.
3. The Graduate Committee will review the petition and make a decision. The chair of the Committee or the Graduate Program Assistant will notify the student of the outcome.
4. Once the Committee makes a decision, the student must complete all of 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:

Candidacy Report:

<https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/candidacyappadv-form2018-re.pdf>

Final Exam Form:

[https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/master\\_examination\\_report\\_editable\\_2018.pdf](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/master_examination_report_editable_2018.pdf)

6. The advisor needs to submit a final grade card after the defense or exam. Students are responsible for meeting deadlines posted on the Graduate School website.

<http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/>. Students may also contact the Graduate Program Assistant at the Department for this information.

### **Plan I: Thesis Option**

Under Plan I, a student must complete a total of 30 credit hours of coursework at the 5000 level or above (including 4–6 Thesis credits, the required Theory and Methods sequence, and Graduate Forum I & II) with grades of B or better. The student must also write and defend a thesis. Students must register for thesis credit hours in the semester of the thesis defense.

#### *Preparation of a Written Thesis*

The thesis must demonstrate competent and independent scholarship and make a useful contribution to sociological knowledge. An M.A. thesis is shorter and entails less original research than a Ph.D. dissertation, but more extensive than a third-year paper. Students will find the format for the M.A. Thesis in "Specifications for Preparation

of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations" from the Graduate School at:

<https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/thesis-and-dissertation-specifications>

#### *Successful Oral Defense of the Thesis*

The thesis defense is a public event at which the candidate explains and defends the thesis. The Advisory Committee assesses the adequacy of the thesis and the candidate's competence in the relevant areas of sociological knowledge. If more than one committee member votes against passing, the candidate fails the defense. Candidates who fail will have a second opportunity to make a successful defense. The committee must specify what the candidate should do in preparation for the second defense. If the candidate fails the second defense, the Department of Sociology has no obligation to provide another opportunity. The committee can require modifications in the thesis even if the candidate passes the defense. Satisfactory completion of these modifications is a condition of passing the defense.

### **Plan II: Non-Thesis Option**

Under Plan II, a student must complete 30 hours of course work at the 5000, level or above (including the required courses) and take a written exam in his or her major area within sociology. The Advisory Committee, here 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. This may either be a

timed examination or an article manuscript such as a third-year paper. The M.A. exam is shorter and less comprehensive than the Specialty Area Comprehensive Examinations given prior to the Ph.D. The Committee, in concert with the student, determines whether there will be an oral defense of the exam. 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 exam. If the candidate fails the second time, the Department of Sociology has no obligation to provide another opportunity.

Students wishing to earn a master's degree are responsible for meeting deadlines posted at [www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academics/graduation-requirements](http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academics/graduation-requirements).

### ***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. As a general guideline, students should consider how they intend to package themselves for the job market. The specialty areas are those in which the student will become sufficiently qualified to teach and do research. Students in years three and four should concentrate on the task of refining their specialty areas. In addition to course work, this should include submitting papers to journals and conferences and preparing for the specialty area comprehensive exam. Students at this stage in the program should work closely with their faculty advisors and other faculty members who can provide mentoring.

### ***Form Specialty Area Comprehensive Examination Committee (SCEC)***

See the specialty comprehensive examination guidelines document for more information. The student's specialty area comprehensive examination committee, or SCEC, administers the specialty area comprehensive examination. This committee consists of five members of the graduate faculty, chosen by the student in consultation with his or her advisor. At least three members (including the advisor) must be tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty of the Department of Sociology at CU Boulder. Outside members are not required for the SCEC but are required for the dissertation committee, as outlined below. All SCEC members must hold current (regular or special) graduate



faculty appointments. Students must advise the Graduate Committee of the members of the SCEC via the graduate program assistant before the end of the fall semester of the fourth program year.

#### *Optional Primary and Secondary Committee Members*

Each graduate student, with the approval of her or his advisor, has the option of naming one or two committee members as secondary members. The primary/secondary designation is not required, but some students find the distinction helpful to divide the labor among committee members. Secondary members of comprehensive examination committees may add their voices to committee decisions whenever they wish to, but especially when the primary members disagree or otherwise ask for the secondary members' input. There is no requirement or expectation that secondary members actively participate in evaluations of comp exams, but individual faculty members may feel comfortable signing off on the exam form only after they have read everything and have fully participated in all committee meetings. Because both primary and secondary members must sign various forms needed for the student to graduate, both should always have copies of examinations. At most, only one committee member from outside the Department of Sociology at CU Boulder can serve as a primary member. With the approval of his or her advisor, a student can make changes in primary or secondary status of committee members at any time.

#### *Specialty Area Comprehensive Examination Reading List*

Students must develop a specialty area comprehensive examination reading list in concert with the advisor and other committee members. When the committee agrees that the list is comprehensive, each member must indicate his or her approval on a signature form. The student is responsible for obtaining approval and signatures.

The Specialty Area Reading List Approval Report is available on the department website, [www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students/forms-deadlines](http://www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students/forms-deadlines). Committee members also may indicate their approval by sending an email to the student, copied to the graduate program assistant.

### ***Specialty Area Comprehensive Exam***

The purpose of the specialty area comprehensive exam is for the student to demonstrate mastery of the relevant literature in the area(s) of choice. Students must take this exam no later than the second full week of August after the fourth program year. Because students must be enrolled full time during the semester they take the exam, students are advised not to schedule the specialty area comp during the summer months. A student who wishes to take the exam during the summer must petition the Graduate Committee by April 1 and have the petition endorsed by his or her advisor. Students must complete the required 45 hours of course work before taking the exam.

Once the student and the SCEC coordinate the timing for the comprehensive exam, it is the student's responsibility to notify the graduate program assistant of the exam at least three weeks in advance, providing the names and designations (if applicable) of the committee members and the exam date(s). The graduate program assistant will then submit an examination report form to the Graduate School for approval of the SCEC at least two weeks in advance of the exam.

### ***Exam Structure***

The specialty area comp is a written exam in which the student answers several questions created by the SCEC. A typical structure is to give the student six questions, two in each of three specialty areas, and allow him or her to choose three questions to answer.

The student may take the exam in one of three ways:

- one 24-hour period
- two 12-hour periods over two consecutive days
- three 8-hour periods over three consecutive days

If the student chooses to take the exam over multiple days, the exam committee will provide the questions in sections. That is, a student taking the exam in two 12-hour periods will receive half of the exam on day one, and half on day two; a student taking the exam in three 8-hour periods will receive the exam in thirds.

### *Evaluating the Exam*

The exam will be graded by the student's SCEC (or its primary members). Evaluation options include: pass, high pass, revise and resubmit, or fail. Students who fail this exam must retake it within one year. A second failure will result in dismissal from the PhD program, at which time a student may, upon approval from the Graduate Committee, work toward a terminal MA degree.

### *Application for Candidacy*

At least three weeks before the specialty area comprehensive exam, the student must submit a Candidacy Application for an Advanced Degree to the graduate program assistant, who will process the completed application and forward it to the Graduate School. The Candidacy Application for an Advanced Degree is available on the Graduate School website, [www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-forms](http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-forms).

### ***Years Five and Six***

#### *Required Dissertation Hours*

Students who have completed the specialty area comp exam must register for a minimum of 5 dissertation hours each fall and spring semester until passing the dissertation defense. Thirty total hours are required. No more than 10 dissertation hours taken prior to the semester the specialty area comp exam is passed may count toward the total requirement. Also, students may take up to 10 hours the same semester as the specialty area comp exam. Thus, up to 20 dissertation hours taken through

the semester the comprehensive exam is passed may count toward the required 30 dissertation credit hours required for the doctoral degree.

#### *Formation of the Dissertation Committee*

The student must work with his or her advisor to form a committee of five members. The dissertation committee may consist of the same five faculty members who served on the SCEC, provided that the outside member requirement is met. The student must designate one member as the committee chair, or two members as co-chairs. One outside member may co-chair, but not chair, a committee. The composition of the committee should be as follows:

- At least **three** members (including the chair) must hold tenured or tenure-track regular graduate faculty appointments in the Department of Sociology at CU Boulder.
- A **fourth** member may be from the Department of Sociology, from another department on campus, or from 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.

Refer to the section, *Optional Primary and Secondary Committee Members*, above for guidance on assigning primary and secondary committee members. 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 to obtain this approval.

#### *Dissertation Proposal/Prospectus and Defense*

Please see the dissertation guidelines document for more details. Students must write a dissertation proposal and orally defend it before the dissertation committee by the end of the fifth program year. The proposal should offer a working outline of the project, developed prior to the defense and in concert with (especially) the primary members of the committee. The Graduate Student Resources page of the department website has some examples and potentially useful information. Formats vary widely, but proposals generally are between 30 and 40 pages long (excluding tables and references). Students are not expected to submit finished chapters of a dissertation at this time. In general, a proposal should establish the topic(s) under investigation, demonstrate mastery of relevant literature, and state the relevant questions that have arisen thus far. It should also establish 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 can 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.

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 work on his or her dissertation project only after the committee has approved the proposal or revised proposal with a majority vote. However, the work might well be underway (for example, as part of a course) at the time of the proposal/prospectus defense.

The student must bring a Dissertation Proposal Defense Report, available on the department website, [www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students/forms-deadlines](http://www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students/forms-deadlines), to the defense. After obtaining signatures, the student must make two copies and follow the directions on the form for submission. 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 and Defense*

Students should aim to complete dissertation research and defend before the end of the sixth program year, generally in the spring semester. The dissertation defense must be scheduled by the posted Graduate School deadline to orally defend the dissertation for graduation the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. Keep in mind that there are enrollment requirements if a defense takes place during a summer term.

Primary committee members should read chapters or sections of the dissertation in progress. 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 at [www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-resources/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation-submission](http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-resources/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation-submission).

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 exam at least three weeks in advance, providing the names of the committee members and the date, time, and location of the defense, along with the dissertation title and a short abstract that can be sent to the department email lists.

The graduate program assistant will then submit an examination report form to the Graduate School for approval of the dissertation committee.

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. Candidates who fail the defense will have a second opportunity to defend. The

committee must specify what the candidate should do to prepare. The department has no obligation to give the student a third chance to defend the dissertation. A committee can (and usually does) require dissertation revisions even if the candidate passes the defense. In the case that a student fails the dissertation defense, he or she 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.

### ***Annual Review and Report***

Department faculty conduct a review of all students, with a particular focus on students in years one through three, every spring. The process involves gathering information on student progress, 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 to feedback over time may face probation or dismissal from the program.

The Graduate Committee, with input from faculty members teaching graduate courses, faculty mentors/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,

***Demonstrating 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 asked to leave the program.

### ***Collecting Information and Timeline for Completion***

Members of the faculty use feedback from three sources for the review: students, primary advisors, and other faculty members.

- ***Student Progress Reports***

All students in the program are required to complete the Graduate Student Annual Report of Progress (available on the department website), which includes all program requirements. In the report, students record course work, teaching assignments, comp exams completed, papers presented, awards and grants received, and other information relevant to evaluation. Each student also is also expected to begin to assemble a CV (curriculum vitae) during the first year and to continue adding to it in subsequent years. Every student must submit a progress report and CV to *both* the graduate program assistant and his or her faculty advisor by the specified date, usually in March or April.

- *Faculty Advisor Assessments*

Each faculty member should assess whether individual meetings with his or her advisees are necessary prior to writing assessments of advisee progress. Such meetings should happen by the specified date, usually in March or April. Faculty advisors should then complete advisor assessments (form available on the department website) for each of their advisees. 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 date, usually in March or April.

- *Other Faculty Assessments*

The faculty collects additional information to identify students who are struggling in the program. 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 will be discussed, as well as students whom any faculty members identify as not making satisfactory progress. 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*

Faculty 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 and/or the graduate chair will be expected to meet with the student to convey the findings by May 31. Students who are progressing satisfactorily will receive an email notification to that effect. For students who have been identified as struggling (a) in many different facets of graduate life, and/or (b) particularly much 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 (which should be held in strict confidence). This 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, available on the department website. Copies of the report must be filed with the faculty advisor, the graduate chair, 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 graduate chair will be responsible for dismissing the student from the program.

### ***Leave of Absence (formerly Time-out) Program***

The leave of absence program allows students who have not yet passed the comprehensive exam stage to leave the graduate program for a specified period without penalty.

Students who have passed the comprehensive exam and wish to take time off should notify the graduate program assistant by email or in writing.

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:

Petition the Graduate Committee for approval.

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, [www.colorado.edu/registrar/students/withdraw-cu/leave-of-absence](http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/students/withdraw-cu/leave-of-absence). 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.

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.

### ***Graduate Student Petitions***

Students may petition the Graduate Committee to request exceptions to rules when extenuating circumstances exist. A petition should take the form of a concise memo or letter, depending on the amount of explanation required. Students should address petitions to the Graduate Committee. The text of the petition should include:

- a summary of the issue
- 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.)
- the names of the student's committee members
- the signatures of the student and his or her faculty advisor

Students should submit petitions to the graduate program assistant or the graduate chair. In general, the Graduate Committee places petitions on the agenda of the next meeting following submission. The Graduate Committee meets monthly during the academic year but not during the summer. Students should plan to submit petitions in time for consideration during the fall and spring semesters. The committee considers petitions on a case-by-case basis. The outcomes of past petitions submitted to the Graduate Committee do not constitute policy and in no way indicate the possible outcome of future petitions submitted by other students.

### ***Plagiarism***

Plagiarism is considered a serious offense. In cases of plagiarism, the Graduate Committee will meet with the student's advisor to determine the appropriate action for the student.

Detailed information on the university's academic integrity policy is provided at [www.colorado.edu/policies/academic-integrity-policy](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/academic-integrity-policy).

## **Appendix**

### *Official Department Email Lists*

**facultysoc:** This email list is for Department of Sociology faculty members only. Faculty members use this list for both official department communication and for personal communication among faculty. Graduate students may not subscribe to the *facultysoc* email list. However, they may ask the staff to forward an email to the *facultysoc* list if the content of the message relates to official department business. Graduate students should not ask to post personal messages to the *facultysoc* list.

**gradsoc:** This email list is for official department communication with graduate students. All graduate students in the Department of Sociology are required to subscribe to this list, and faculty members may subscribe to *gradsoc* if they so choose. Graduate students are required to check their official university account regularly. This is the only formal means of communication for graduate students in the Department of Sociology.

Graduate students and faculty members may post to *gradsoc* if the content of the message relates to official department business. Graduate students or faculty members should not post personal messages to the *gradsoc* list.

### *Helpful Websites:*

**Commencement:** [www.colorado.edu/commencement/](http://www.colorado.edu/commencement/)

**Financial Aid Office:** [www.colorado.edu/financialaid/](http://www.colorado.edu/financialaid/)

**Graduate School:** [www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/](http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/)

**Graduate School Forms:** [www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/academics/](http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/academics/)

**Graduate Teacher Program (GTP):** [www.colorado.edu/gtp/](http://www.colorado.edu/gtp/)

**In-state Tuition (Establishing Residency):** [www.colorado.edu/registrar/state-tuition](http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/state-tuition)

**Registrar's Office:** [www.colorado.edu/registrar/](http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/)

**Transcript Ordering:** [www.colorado.edu/registrar/transcripts](http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/transcripts)

**Tuition and Fees:** <https://bursar.colorado.edu/>

**United Government of Graduate Students (UGGS):** [www.colorado.edu/uggs/](http://www.colorado.edu/uggs/)

**VPN Setup:** [www.colorado.edu/oit/services/network-internet-services/vpn](http://www.colorado.edu/oit/services/network-internet-services/vpn)

**Writing Center:** [www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html](http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html)