

Graduate Program Handbook

*~a resource for all faculty and graduate students
in the Department of Sociology~*

Graduate Office

January 2016

Introduction and Context

*Supervisory and mentoring relationships are core to the success of graduate students, faculty, and the department as a whole.
We foster collegial relationships that individually and collectively develop the intellectual, professional, and personal skills of our members.*

What is the purpose of the handbook?

The Sociology Graduate Supervisory Handbook is meant to be a comprehensive, up-to-date resource for graduate students and faculty supervisors in the department, and should be the first place people look for information and guidance.

The Handbook provides the following:

- PART I: core principles* of graduate supervisory and mentoring relationships
- PART II: tips and guidelines* for developing and maintaining successful supervisory roles and relationships (from setting up that initial meeting to resolving conflict to devising a workable plan)
- PART III: timelines and step-by-step procedures* for each graduate program in the department (PhD, MA Thesis, MA Course, MA Crim Justice), including *one-stop-shop referrals* to relevant forms and resources.
- PART IV: key resources* on and off campus

While this handbook focuses on the thesis or major research project supervisory relationships, it also accounts for other mentoring relationships that contribute to graduate student success, such as those formed in teaching and research assistantships, specialization exams, supervisory committee work, research collaboration and co-authorship, and a variety of other formal and informal contexts.

Who is the handbook for?

The handbook aims to facilitate strong mentoring relationships by focusing on the roles and responsibilities of both faculty and graduate students, and by pointing to the broader roles played by the sociology graduate office and other programs and resources at the U of A.

How did the handbook come about?

In 2014, the Sociology graduate office launched a project exploring successful graduate student supervision with the goal of crafting a handbook. A survey of department faculty and graduate students was followed by a set of round table discussions. Further input came from a survey of alumni, existing graduate manuals, and a variety of U of A resources – including a 2013 report on the quality of graduate supervision at the University of Alberta. *Special thanks go to Nancy Evans (Graduate Advisor), Sara Dorow (Associate Chair, Graduate), and Kelsi Barkway (Graduate Research Assistant), for many hours of work assembling the handbook.*

Note: The University Calendar is the official source for information regarding program information; any discrepancy found between this handbook and the calendar will be resolved according to the calendar.

I: Core Principles of Supervisory and Mentoring Relationships

The overarching principles for supervisory relationships in Sociology were derived from consultation (survey feedback and round table discussions) with faculty and graduate students in the department.

The three principles below assume a shared commitment in the department to scholarly rigour, lively intellectual dialogue, professional practice, and diverse approaches.

See Part II of the handbook, “Roles & Relationships,” for specific guidelines and tips for putting these principles into practice.

Principle 1: CLEAR AND TIMELY COMMUNICATION

- Supervisors/mentors provide meaningful, useful, and critical feedback to students regarding their scholarly work, progress in the program, and concerns or questions
- Students actively seek, integrate, and ask questions about all aspects of their scholarly work (research, teaching, writing, professional development, etc.)
- Supervisor and student discuss and agree on a general approach to communicating with each other
- Supervisor and student share responsibility to:
 - set out clear expectations for their respective roles and responsibilities (see Roles and Responsibilities and Timelines sections below)
 - directly address misunderstandings or conflicts
 - adhere to negotiated meeting times, schedules, and deadlines, and inform each other about changes to those schedules (note that supervision continues during summers and sabbatical unless other arrangements are made – see Appendix E of the Faculty Agreement)

What is a reasonable timeline for providing/expecting feedback on written work?

Assuming a timeline has been agreed upon and adhered to, and knowing that a variety of circumstances can intervene...

- for a short proposal, letter, or application – 1-2 weeks
- for a thesis chapter, article, or full proposal – 2-3 weeks
- for a full thesis – 4-6 weeks

Principle 2: RESPECT AND INTEGRITY IN SCHOLARLY PRACTICE

- Supervisors/mentors and students aim for:
 - interactions that are respectful, professional, and open to honest critique
 - workspaces that are welcoming and fair
- Supervisors/mentors and students demonstrate professional integrity, including:
 - conducting research in an ethical manner, in accordance with U of A policies
 - developing a clear understanding concerning ownership and acknowledgement of intellectual labour and property
- Supervisors/mentors model and invite respectful, professional conversation and debate, keeping in mind the power imbalances that exist between faculty and students

Principle 3: ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

- Supervisors/mentors proactively support and advise students on disciplinary knowledge and skills as well as professional development and career paths
- Faculty in any supervisory/mentoring relationship discuss students' specific skills and interests, and actively seek ways to help students develop them
- Students take responsibility for their professional development in consultation with supervisors, the sociology graduate office, and the broader set of resources available on and off campus
- Supervisors and students together consider:
 - academic and alt/non-academic career options
 - appropriate participation in research, teaching, and professional skill development opportunities (training workshops, grant applications, assistantships, etc.)
 - opportunities for collaboration, networking, and apprenticing

By the time of graduation, the quality of supervision often makes the difference between a good and an outstanding graduate program.

II: Roles and Relationships (Developing and Maintaining Supervisory Relationships)

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Student Checklist

Supervisor Checklist

A. The Thesis Supervisory Relationship

The most important mentoring relationship in the MA and PhD programs is between the thesis supervisor and student. (For the purposes of this handbook, ‘thesis’ includes the capping project in the MA course-based program.) Student and supervisor should develop and maintain this relationship through ongoing communication and interaction, mutually agreed upon goals, and respectful, critical engagement with a student’s learning, research, and professional development. This section offers tips for navigating some of the important junctures in a supervisory relationship.

Choosing a Supervisor

Choosing a supervisor usually happens by the second semester of a student’s program. Prior to meeting with a potential supervisor, students can seek out information to help determine the potential fit of a supervisor:

- Look online for information about a supervisor’s stated research and teaching interests, recent publications, recently supervised projects, public profile, and online CV.
- Talk with other graduate students who are being supervised by this person to gain a sense of their supervisory style.
- Find out about the person’s style and approach through taking a course with them, going to one of their talks, and/or requesting an informal meeting to discuss your respective research interests.

Here are a few questions for a student and a potential supervisor to consider and discuss when forming a supervisory relationship (for a more detailed list of items to cover at your first meeting, see the [FGSR Checklist for First Meeting with a Graduate Student](#)):

- What kinds of research does the faculty member conduct and supervise? What research interests does the student have? Is there a good fit between the content and approach of the student’s project, and the expertise and interests of the faculty member?
- What previous supervisory experience does the faculty member have?
- How many students does the faculty member currently supervise?
- Is the faculty member actively involved in moving students ahead in their program? Do the faculty member’s students graduate in reasonable lengths of time?
- What kinds of opportunities for collaboration and professional development are available (co-authorship, research assistantship, reading/writing group, etc.)?

Co-Supervision: Things to Consider

Co-supervision of a PhD or MA Student occurs when two professors share the entire supervisory process for one graduate student. While each professor may not be involved to the same extent at each point in the process, and each supervisor may bring different complementary strengths, all supervisory decisions are the shared responsibility of both supervisors. Co-supervision offers unique benefits and challenges. Here are a few factors to consider:

- Why is co-supervision in this case a better approach than single supervision?
- Do the two potential supervisors have a strong working relationship?
- What elements will each supervisor bring to the supervisory relationship?
- Are the potential co-supervisors open to working as part of a team? Have they worked as a team in the past?
- How will communication be managed? In cases where supervisors offer conflicting advice, how will this be negotiated? What steps will be taken to help ensure a student does not fall through the cracks or get pulled in two very different directions?

Key Facets of a Successful Supervisory Relationship

There are many factors that can impact the success of the supervisor/student relationship. What follows is a brief outline of *key areas of interaction* between students and supervisors.

Timeline for Completion – and the Plan for Getting There

Discussions about the timeline for completion of the graduate degree program should attend to the student's expected timeline, program requirements and options, commitments the student has outside of the degree program, and how supervisors can assist the students in meeting their goals. A full review and discussion of a student's progress must be conducted at least once a year (before the Annual Progress Report, due in June each year, is one good time to do so).

A variety of factors should be considered in these discussions:

- Balancing activities to support intellectual development, professional skill building, and program completion.
- Professional goals of the student (e.g. academic, government, or other career interests) and relevant pathways and opportunities for meeting those goals.
- Review of plans, including any changes to supervisor's and supervisee's time commitments, and expectations for availability. PLEASE NOTE:
 - the department requires that students remain in Edmonton for the first two years of the PhD program;
 - GAships cannot be guaranteed when students are away from campus;
 - working full-time while completing a full-time graduate degree is strongly discouraged;
 - except when on holiday, supervisors are required to be available to students throughout the year (including sabbaticals, unless other arrangements are made).

Methods of Feedback

Feedback is needed on a variety of projects, including conference papers, scholarship proposals, job application packages, and thesis drafts. It is important for supervisor and supervisee to discuss different approaches to providing feedback to determine what combination of methods works well for both parties (i.e. meeting in person, emailing drafts, summative versus in-text comments, etc.), and to agree on timelines for submitting items and receiving feedback. The main objectives are to ensure that a student receives feedback, understands what is necessary to move forward, understands the roles of different members of the supervisory committee relative to their work, and has a clear mechanism for responding to feedback.

Scholarship/Funding Applications

The department expects students to apply for scholarships for which they are eligible, including SSHRC, internal University of Alberta Scholarships, and other relevant awards. The scholarship handbook is available on the [FGSR website](#) and the department provides a spreadsheet of [awards and timelines](#) throughout the year.

Supervisors are expected to provide guidance in how to prepare and complete proposals, review scholarship applications, notify students if they are aware of awards for which they are eligible, and provide letters of recommendation.

Students are responsible to look into available awards, write proposals with enough time to receive feedback from their supervisor, and provide reference letters writers with award details and completed application documents.

Professional Development and Job Preparation

Opportunities to consider various career pathways and to develop a variety of skills are provided by the Department, FGSR, and other programs at the University of Alberta (including the U of A Career Centre, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Faculty of Extension, the Community Service-Learning Program, and others).

Supervisors are expected to be aware of these opportunities and to regularly discuss a student's particular career interests with them. They should also help students to build the skills and the profile needed for success in the job market, and advise students regarding the type and timing of career development opportunities. While many professional development activities will happen outside of the direct supervisory relationship, a supervisor is expected to provide or refer students to appropriate opportunities, such as reading/writing groups and research assistantships, and to help with scholarship applications, networking, conference attendance, co-authorship, and support for job applications.

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking relevant funding and training and by consulting their supervisors on major professional development and career planning decisions.

Starting in Fall 2016, all U of A graduate students will be required to develop and follow an Individual Professional Development Plan.

When Issues Arise – Resolving Conflict

Problems can arise at any point in supervisory relationships. The point at which a conflict arises will likely impact the consequences of the conflict and the actions taken to address it. There are important steps that can be taken to help resolve the conflict and to address it in a professional manner. The [FGSR Graduate Program Manual](#) has further resources and information on what steps to follow.

- Take early action. It can be easy to avoid discussing difficult situations. While some situations may resolve without any intervention, others may become worse if action is not taken.
- Look for the root cause of the problem – it may not be what is initially presented.
- Seek resolution at as low a level as is possible – going to higher authorities can involve more time and complexities, and should be reserved for especially challenging circumstances.
- Remember that there is a power imbalance in supervisory relationships: students have a lot to lose, and may not feel comfortable speaking freely.

Transitioning through the Program

As students move through the program, there are *transition stages* during which they might feel unsure of how to maintain momentum towards finishing the degree. The following section outlines a few moments during a program when students may face difficulties. While this is not a comprehensive list, many of the strategies suggested can be applied to a variety of situations.

Moving Beyond Coursework

After coursework is completed students may feel they lack direction. The end to short-term deadlines and regular feedback and assessment may be a difficult transition. A number of steps can help students adjust. For example:

- Participate in departmental academic and social events, including opportunities to present research ideas and progress, to maintain contact with peers and other professors in the department.
- PhD students should take full advantage of the ungraded courses Soc 606 and 607 (i.e., a conference paper, a writing or reading group, coordinating a scholarly event, etc.) to help maintain or seek out new connections and to build professional development.
- Maintain and perhaps increase the frequency of meetings between supervisor and student to provide updates on progress, discuss questions or concerns, and plans for next steps (e.g., specialization exam, thesis proposal).

Writing the Thesis

The task of writing the thesis arrives when all other program requirements and original research activities have been completed. This period can pose new stresses and challenges for students.

For example:

- Writer's block. It is important to discuss writing habits, models for structuring a thesis, and resources for helping students with their writing.
 - Setting small writing goals can help motivate students during this stage
 - There are numerous resources available on and off campus to help with writing, including the Centre for Writers and the Writing Centre.
- Isolation. Finding other graduate students who are at a similar point may be helpful, whether this is via informal interactions, short-term retreats, or longer term reading or writing groups.
- Managing large amounts of data and/or a book-length set of ideas. Students should work closely with their supervisor and supervisory committee in making decisions about the structure and organization of the thesis.

B. The Supervisory Committee

All thesis-based students will have a thesis supervisor plus at least two other supervisory committee members. While supervisors are ultimately responsible for forming and formalizing the committee, student and supervisor should work collaboratively to determine the make-up of the committee. Supervisory committee members can provide significant input by acting as a sounding board for ideas, providing developmental input on parts of the thesis or on other facets of a student's program, and providing expertise that complements the supervisor's areas of expertise. Supervisory committees often offer the most value when established as early as is feasible in a student's program, and when regular meetings are held with the student (especially following the candidacy/thesis proposal exam). FGSR regulations stipulate that supervisory committees should meet once a year until a student completes the program to discuss progress and to ensure that a student is receiving the support needed. The completion of the sociology department's required [Annual Progress Report](#) can serve as a catalyst for such a meeting.

Some points to consider when selecting supervisory committee members include:

- Is the person available (i.e. are they around campus or willing to come to campus for meetings) and will they likely be around for the remainder of the student's project? Are they approachable?
- Does their area of expertise and approach to research fit with the research project, and expand or complement the central contributions of the supervisor(s)?

C. Teaching Assistant (TA) and Research Assistant (RA) Mentoring

Relationships between faculty supervisors and student RAs or TAs can provide an opportunity to get to know and work with a variety of members in the department. Graduate assistantships are employment relationships and also a key component of professional development.

The department provides a detailed [Time Use Sheet](#) to help students and professors engage in a discussion about the work that will be expected of the student, and an overview of how the hours will be spent. These details should be discussed and clarified in a face-to-face meeting at the beginning of the appointment. Points to consider:

- o What is the timeline for the GA activities? Are there crucial days or weeks when the workload is especially heavy or pressing?
- o What kinds of skills and interests are needed for the RA or TA assignment?
- o What experiences and skills does a student bring to the GAship?
- o What skills does a student wish to develop as part of the GAship?
- o What opportunities can the faculty member offer that will contribute to the student's professional and scholarly development?
- o What resources and supports will a student need to successfully carry out the TA or RA duties, and how will they be provided?
- o How will the supervisor and student communicate about progress and/or problems? How will they check on any need to adjust workload, priorities, or types of duties?

Supervisors should be mentors and professional role models. They should be clear about deadlines, priorities, and expectations, and offer the resources and developmental steps needed for student GAs to be successful. They should plan with the TA/RA to ensure that duties do not impede a student's progress through the program.

Students should seek guidance and practice professionalism (time management, organization, planning, etc.). They should be clear about their abilities and interests, and consider how they can best meet the needs of the project while also developing new skills.

D.Roles and Responsibilities

All graduate students and supervisors in Sociology should be aware of the rules and policies applying to supervisors, graduate students, graduate advisors, departments, and FGSR as laid out in the University Calendar and in the [Graduate Program Manual](#).

Student Responsibilities

- Consider yourself a junior colleague within the department
- In consultation with your supervisor work to establish a reasonable timeline, and consult your supervisor if difficulties arise in meeting these timelines
- Be respectful in your response to feedback
- Be aware of and conform to departmental and university deadlines, specifically those that are outlined in the graduate portions of the University Calendar
- Be aware of possible scholarship opportunities, and seek advice and assistance from the department and your supervisor in making applications, etc.
- Be aware of your supervisor's and the department's expectations for graduate students
- Maintain open communication with your supervisor
- Inform your supervisor regularly about progress, and provide the department with an annual progress report
- Participate in department events promoting professional development
- Participate in departmental research days and conferences
- In the event of a conflict in the supervisor-student relationship, discuss with your supervisor and graduate coordinator in a timely fashion
- Inform your supervisor of how you can be contacted, and when you will be unavoidably absent, particularly for longer periods of time

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Consider graduate students as junior colleagues
- Guide the student in the selection and planning of a meaningful research topic that can be completed within a reasonable time frame for the student's degree
- Establish with the student a reasonable timeline, including milestones to measure progress throughout the project
- Provide a student with adequate opportunity and environment for discussion and constructive feedback throughout their degree process
- Ensure there are sufficient material and supervisory resources for each graduate student under supervision
- Provide guidance and feedback on progress to help ensure a student's successful completion of their program. This includes:
 - Be reasonably accessible between scheduled meetings
 - Establish regular meeting times for discussions about progress
- Ensure a supervisory committee is established in accordance with graduate unit practices or regulations
- Assist and encourage the wider professional development of students, which can be promoted through:
 - Participate in departmental research days and conferences
 - Attend and present at conferences
 - Be willing to write reference letters
 - Introduce professional colleagues and assisting in the creation of a network of contacts
- Maintain open communication with the student
- Inform your graduate student of how you can be contacted, and when you will be unavoidably absent, particularly for longer periods of time

Graduate Office Responsibilities

- Perform a supervisory role to new students until a supervisor is officially assigned (usually by the end of the first year)
- Provide guidance regarding choice of supervisor and committee members
- Offer regular and diverse professional development opportunities (in teaching, research, and skill development), and refer students and supervisors to professional development available outside of the department
- Ensure that students and supervisors are informed of policies, procedures, programs, and resources inside and outside the department
- Track the progress of individual graduate students through the program, starting with the Annual Progress Report
- Manage and track all departmental paperwork related to a student's exams, coursework, funding, convocation, etc.
- Seek input from graduate students and faculty regarding supervisory needs, and respond to supervisory issues as they arise and as help is requested
- Ensure students receive proper supervision and that the regulations and requirements of FGSR are met
- The department maintains open communication with students concerning any problem; in the event of a conflict in the supervisor/student relationship, the graduate coordinator will discuss the issues with the student and supervisor in a timely fashion

Other Major Areas Managed by the Graduate Office

- Student Funding Arrangements
- Teaching and Research Assistantships
- Office space
- Awards and Scholarships
- Conference and Research Funds

Student Checklist

- ☐ I chose my supervisor after appropriate review of supervisor options
- ☐ I have had sufficient meetings with my supervisor and have discussed:
 - ☐ Potential or actual thesis topics
 - ☐ Applying for scholarships and awards
 - ☐ Timelines and major milestones including anticipated completion time
 - ☐ When and how supervisory committee will be chosen
 - ☐ Frequency and style of meetings
 - ☐ Who arranges formal meetings
 - ☐ Methods of informal communication
 - ☐ Turnaround time for major questions, drafts of thesis chapters, publications, or conference presentations
 - ☐ Intellectual property issues such as authorship on publications and conference presentations

Supervisor Checklist

- ☐ I have discussed academic program issues with my graduate student, including:
 - ☐ How and when the supervisory committee will be formed, the role of the supervisory committee as well as my role as supervisor in selecting appropriate members
 - ☐ Ensure the supervisory committee meets a minimum of once per year to assess progress of the graduate student
 - ☐ The importance of maintaining open communication throughout the student's program of studies
 - ☐ Frequency, length, and format of individual and group meetings, including the preferred method of communication and timelines for feedback
 - ☐ Expectations for student work hours and vacation
 - ☐ Any extended absences for myself or others critically involved in the student's research, and a plan for continuity of supervision

III: Program Timelines and Procedures

This is your one-stop resource for graduate program timelines and procedures in Sociology. While all graduate degrees in the department have some common features (e.g., fulfilling coursework, ethics requirements, and identifying a supervisor), each graduate degree program is unique. Graduate students and supervisors will find here a detailed, step-by-step guide to each graduate degree program (PhD, and all MA programs), with links to relevant forms and resources. Consult the website for information on coursework requirements for each program.

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Ethics Requirements

To be completed before application to graduate and before undertaking any research with humans or animals

Purpose: There are two different ethics components to your program:

- 1) All students require 8 hours of ethics training. This is achieved by completing the [Graduate Ethics Training](#) course online and attending the Sociology pro-seminar (SOC 605) ethics lecture.
- 2) Students that are doing research that involves interviews or human research must complete the ethics application before beginning their research. Please visit the [Research Ethics Office](#) to begin your application with your supervisor.

Action	Resource	Check
Student will go online and complete the GET training module. When finished send the grade sheet to the graduate office for your file.	Graduate Ethics Training	
Student attends the SOC 605 lecture on ethics and sign in to make sure you receive credit for attending	Offered as a part of the Pro-Seminar	
If research involves human participants student will complete an online application for ethics approval at the Research Ethics Office.	Research Ethics Office	

Identifying a Thesis Supervisor

By second semester of the first year of the program

Every student in a thesis-based program at the U of A is required to have a supervisor. In Sociology, all thesis-based graduate students must formally identify a supervisor by the second semester of their first year, but as they are developing relationships with faculty, they can approach a faculty member at any time.

It is strongly advised that students begin to have initial conversations with potential supervisor(s) early in the program (see PART I of the Handbook). In many cases, a possible supervisor has been identified during the application and admission stages.

Until the formal identification of a supervisor, the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies acts as the official supervisor for new graduate students, and can assist in identifying an appropriate supervisor.

The timelines and step-by-step guidelines in the following pages provide further detail on the roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors, and supervisory committees in the thesis-based MA and PhD programs.

Submitting your MA or PhD Thesis and Applying for Convocation

After successful defense and before the end of the sixth year in the program

Purpose: Adhere to FGSR guidelines in order to ensure you have officially submitted your thesis by the proper deadline. There are two important deadlines, the convocation deadline and the registration deadline; *these vary each year*. This is necessary to successfully graduate and ensure you do not pay extra fees.

Action	Resource	Check
Student checks FGSR website to determine deadlines for submission, and ensures that the thesis is properly formatted. There are deadlines for Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. These deadlines are connected to registration requirements for each term.	Formatting your thesis.	
The Program Completion form is submitted to the Graduate Office by the Exam Chair following successful completion of the exam; the Graduate Office then submits the form to FGSR by the deadlines.	FGSR guidelines for students admitted Fall 2011 and after.	
Student uploads thesis and signs off on Library Release and other FGSR requirements		
Student applies for Convocation on Bear Tracks	https://www.beartracks.ualberta.ca/	

U of A Online Resources

GRADUATE PROGRAM POLICIES, PROCEDURES, and FORMS

[Graduate Program Manual](#) - rules and regulation governed by the Faculty of Graduate Studies

[Faculty of Graduate Studies Forms Cabinet](#)

[Registration and Fees Deadlines](#)

[Department of Sociology Forms Cabinet](#)

SUPERVISION

[Graduate Program Manual](#)

GRADUATE STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

[Graduate Student Collective Agreement](#)

[Student Employment](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

[Professional Development Resources, Workshops, Programs, and Opportunities \(FGSR\)](#)

[My Grad Skills](#)

AWARDS and FUNDING

[FGSR Awards and Funding](#)

[Sociology Awards Page](#)

[Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#)

PhD Program

PhD Program Timeline and Checklist

Year One

- ___ Identify the Supervisor
- ___ Complete Coursework
- ___ Formalize Specialization Topic and Select Chair
- ___ Complete Program Ethics Requirement
- ___ Submit Annual Progress Report to Grad Office

By...

- March 1
- April 30
- May 15
- May 31
- July 1

Year Two

- ___ Complete Specialization Exam Requirements
- ___ Name the Supervisory Committee
- ___ Complete Ungraded Courses Soc 606 and 607
- ___ Submit Annual Progress Report to Grad Office

- December 31
- March 1
- April 30
- July 1

Year Three

- ___ Name the Candidacy Examiners
- ___ Obtain Research Ethics Approval (if applicable)
- ___ Complete Candidacy Exam Requirements
- ___ Begin Thesis Research
- ___ Submit Annual Progress Report to Grad Office

- August 31 (or earlier!)
- July 1

Years Four and Five

- ___ Hold Annual Meeting with Supervisory Committee
- ___ Conduct Thesis Research and Writing
- ___ Hold Final Oral Examination
- ___ Submit Annual Progress Report to Grad Office

- July 1

All PhD Students must be registered full time to maintain standing in the program. When not taking courses equal to nine credits, full-time registration in any given term is fulfilled by registering in thesis credits: Thesis 903, 906, or 909 as required to maintain fulltime registration of 9 credits per term.

PhD Ungraded Courses

SOC 606 and SOC 607

By April 30 of the second year of the PhD (department requirement)

Purpose: Ungraded courses are designed to provide a bridge between graded courses and the completion of the PhD dissertation. The general goals are: to improve the intellectual culture of the department by fostering informal discussion and debate; to encourage interaction among students and faculty following completion of graded courses; to take advantage of on and off-campus events and opportunities (e.g. distinguished visitors, workshops, conferences, etc.); and to further develop professional skills related to research and teaching. In the spirit of these objectives a wide variety of activities will be considered, including: informal reading courses; the preparation of a teaching syllabus; seminars devoted to revising papers for submission for publication; exploratory research projects; advanced foreign language training; major responsibilities in professional organizations or conferences; participation in a formal writing group; and participating in local or off-campus seminars. *Each of the two required ungraded courses must involve time and work equivalent to at least half of the contact time in a graded semester course (i.e. 20 hours).*

Action	Resource	Check
Student develops a proposal for a professional activity for approval by the Associate Chair (Graduate) and identifies a faculty sponsor. Each proposal form is to be returned to the Graduate Office before the Term registration deadline in the Term in which the activity will be completed, with the signatures of both the student and the faculty sponsor. NOTE: Students must register in SOC 606 and SOC 607 in the same term (usually winter term of the second year) to receive course credit for these ungraded courses, but the work may be completed over two terms.	SOC 606 and 607 Ungraded Course Proposal Registration deadlines	
Upon completion of the work for <i>Soc 606</i> , the Student <u>must</u> submit a short (1-2 page) report outlining what has been accomplished and sign for completion.		
Upon completion of the work for <i>Soc 607</i> , the Student <u>must</u> submit a short (1-2 page) report outlining what has been accomplished and sign for completion.		

PhD Specialization Examination

To be completed by December of the second year (department requirement)

Purpose: The specialization exam is designed to help PhD students develop a secondary area of expertise that is distinct from the one proposed for their dissertation project. Students complete their specialization before their candidacy exam. Normally, a student's Specialization Examination Committee and Supervisory Committee will not overlap completely, and normally a student's Supervisor is not the Chair of the Specialization Exam.

NOTE: The Specialization is under review. More information coming soon.*

	Action	Resource	Check
SPECIALIZATION PREPARATION	Student selects the topic area of specialization (subfield or subfields) in consultation with the Thesis Supervisor.		
	Student approaches a Sociology faculty member to be the Chair of the Specialization Exam. Normally the program supervisor is not the Specialization Exam Chair.		
	Student and Chair review the exam requirements, determine what format the exam will take (take-home exam, in-room exam, or publishable paper) and determine the membership of the Specialization Exam Committee (normally one other faculty member from Sociology and one from outside).	Three format options	
READING LIST	Student develops an initial reading list with input and guidance from the Chair.		
	Chair invites the two other committee members to join the committee		
	Student and Committee develop and finalize a detailed reading list and agree on a procedure and timeline.		
FORM	Student completes Part One of the Specialization Exam form, appends the final specialization plan and reading list, obtains the Chair's signature, and submits to the Sociology Graduate Office for approval. (Keep a copy for your records.)	Specialization Exam form	
EXAM COMMITTEE	Exam Committee communicates aims and procedures to student at least six weeks prior to scheduled examination date.		
	Exam Committee evaluates the outcome: to pass, students must receive an overall pass by the majority of examiners. In the case of a take-home exam, each question must receive a pass from the majority of examiners.	Specialization Exam form	
EXAM	Upon successful completion of the specialization, the Student completes Part Two of the Specialization Exam form by attaching a one-page report, obtaining the signature of the Exam Chair, and submitting to the Sociology Graduate Office.	Specialization Exam form	

- Reading Lists can vary from 40-70 sources, depending on mix of articles and books.
- The three take-home exam essays tend to be 12-15 pages in length; questions are given to the student at the beginning of the designated seven-day period (and may be drawn from a longer list of questions developed earlier in the process).
- Publishable articles are usually of standard publication length, i.e. 6000 to 8000 words.

PhD Candidacy Examination

To be completed by the end of the third year of the PhD program (FGSR requirement)

Purpose: The candidacy exam moves the student into the thesis portion of the PhD program. The candidacy examination is an oral examination. The department requires that students complete their Specialization Examination prior to the Candidacy Examination, but the specialization exam does not form part of the candidacy exam itself. Once a student's coursework is complete, ongoing preparation for the doctoral candidacy exam should take place between the student, supervisor, and supervisory committee.

For candidacy examinations, students must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committee that they possess:

- 1) an adequate knowledge of the discipline and of the subject matter relevant to the thesis;
- 2) the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level; and
- 3) the ability to meet any other requirements found in the department's published policy on candidacy examinations.

The candidacy examination must be held within three years of the commencement of the program in accordance with Section 8.7.1: The Degree of PhD of the Graduate Program Manual. The candidacy examination must be passed no less than six months prior to taking the final oral thesis examination.

If the candidacy exam is not completed by the end of the third year, the **student** must complete an [Application for Doctoral Program Requirements Extension form](#) (FGSR requirement).

Action		Resource	Check
PREPARATION	Student works with Supervisor to decide on the topic and direction of the thesis and the format of the thesis (standard or paper-based), and constitution of the supervisory committee (usually two members from Sociology and one from outside).	Sociology Paper-Based Thesis Guidelines	
EXAM COMMITTEE	Supervisor works with Student to constitute the Supervisory Committee (usually one other member from inside the department and one from outside the department) and to decide on two additional arm's length examiners for the candidacy exam. The final committee consists of the three members of the Supervisory Committee plus two arm's-length examiners (one may be from Sociology and one from another department).	Committee Membership Rules	
EXAM ARRANGEMENTS	Supervisor consults with Supervisory Committee members to determine if the student is ready to go to candidacy, usually by distributing a copy of the draft candidacy proposal for review.		
	Supervisor provides the Graduate Program Administrator with the following information at least four weeks in advance of the exam: date, time, and location of the Candidacy Exam; the name of the Exam Chair (from Sociology), the U of A examiner external to the department (internal external) and the name and department of the arm's length examiner.	Request for candidacy exam form	

	Student provides the examining committee with a final copy of the proposal at least three weeks prior to the exam date.		
EXAM	The final exam results in one of the following outcomes: adjourned, pass, conditional pass, fail and repeat, fail with a recommendation to terminate the doctoral program or for a change of category to a master's program. NOTE: The student should also provide evidence that (where applicable) research ethics approval has been sought or received.	See FGSR Website for rules and procedures governing the exam Decision of the Candidacy Examining Committee	

- Candidacy Proposals vary in length, but generally they are 40-50 pages.
- Candidacy Exams typically run for two hours but may run longer as needed. Each committee retains the right to establish its examination processes. A common procedure is to hold two rounds of questions, with each round of questions proceeding in order from the arm's length examiners to the supervisory committee and ending with the supervisor.

PhD Final Examination

Completed at least six months after the candidacy exam

Purpose: A doctoral thesis, at a minimum, must embody the results of original investigations and analyses and be of such quality as to merit publication, meeting the standards of reputable scholarly publications. It should be of high caliber and should advance knowledge in the student's major field of study. Since it is an extensive piece of work and likely to be the basis of further endeavors, the thesis should be genuinely interesting and important. It should be well researched, well thought out, and well written.

The Manual of Regulations and Guidelines for Thesis Preparation is available on the FGSR website.

	Action	Resource	Check
THESIS PREPARATION	In collaboration with the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee the Student will work on the area of research presented in the candidacy examination. The supervisory committee and the student <i>meet at least once annually</i> during this period.	Thesis Requirement and Preparation Read this early! FGSR Thesis Deadlines for Submission and Registration	
	Supervisor reads and provides timely feedback and guidance on thesis chapters and on the thesis as a whole. Members of the supervisory committee provide review and input on chapter drafts as warranted.		
EXAM COMMITTEE	Supervisor confirms with examiners that they are willing to serve on the committee. The final committee consists of the three members of the Supervisory Committee plus at least two arm's-length examiners ("internal external" plus external examiner). Often, a third internal examiner (not necessarily arm's length) is also included. These examiners may be the same as for the Candidacy Exam. See below regarding the identification of, and invitation to, the External Examiner.	Committee Membership Rules	
EXTERNAL EXAMINER	Supervisor contacts a prospective External Examiner several months before the expected date of the final exam for an initial assessment of their interest in serving as an external examiner. Once preliminary interest has been confirmed, and <i>at least two months before the expected final exam date</i> , the Supervisor sends a copy of the External Examiner's CV to the Sociology Graduate Program Administrator with a request for the External to be approved and invited by the Dean of Arts. NOTE: an External Examiner should be a recognized authority in the field, in a tenured university position, and active in graduate student supervision. The External Examiner must also not have any close personal or professional relationship to the supervisor or student.	FGSR - Approval of External Reader or Examiner	

EXAM ARRANGEMENTS	At least two months before the exam, and if and when all members of the Supervisory Committee are ready to indicate that the thesis can go ahead to a final oral exam, the Supervisor contacts the members of the supervisory committee to request their signatures on the Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form, indicating “that the thesis is of adequate substance and quality to warrant that the student proceed to the final examination.” This form is submitted to the Graduate Office (acceptance by email directly from committee members is also acceptable). At the same time, the Supervisor notifies the Graduate Office of the final exam using the departmental form “Request to Arrange PhD Final Defense.”	Sociology Graduate Program Form - Request to Arrange PhD Final Defense Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form	
	Once an External is approved and invited by the Dean of Arts, and <i>at least five weeks in advance</i> , the Supervisor contacts the student and <i>all</i> members of the committee to set the date and time for the exam, and to assess video-conferencing arrangements. These final details must then be conveyed to the Graduate Program Administrator.		
	Student must provide a final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate Program Administrator so that it can be sent to the External Examiner. FGSR regulations require that the External be given four weeks to read the dissertation. The student/supervisor ensure that all other committee members receive a copy of the dissertation.		
	If the exam is to begin with a public presentation, it is up to the Student and Supervisor to notify the department and any other potential audience members. Usually, the public presentation takes up the first thirty minutes of the exam period, after which visitors are asked to leave.		
	The final exam results in one of the following outcomes: adjourned, pass, pass subject to revisions, fail. The decision of the examining committee will be based both on the content of the thesis and on the candidate's ability to defend it.	See FGSR Website for rules and procedures governing the exam	
GRADUATION	Student applies for graduation on Bear Tracks and uploads thesis for FGSR review	https://www.beartracks.ualberta.ca/ (See “Submitting Your MA or PhD Thesis” in this Handbook.)	

- PhD Theses vary in length, but generally they are at least 200 pages.
- Final Exams typically last up to three hours but may run longer. Each committee retains the right to establish its examination processes. A common procedure is to hold two rounds of questions, with each round of questions proceeding from the arm's length examiners (usually starting with the External Examiner) to the supervisory committee and ending with the supervisor.
- It is standard procedure for the candidate to leave the room at the beginning of the exam while the committee establishes and clarifies procedures, and to leave again at the conclusion of the exam during deliberations.

MA (Thesis-Based) Program

MA (Thesis) Program Timeline and Checklist

Year One

- ___ Identify the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee
- ___ Complete Coursework
- ___ Submit First Draft of Thesis Proposal
- ___ Submit Annual Progress Report to Grad Office
- ___ Distribute Final Thesis Proposal to Thesis Committee

By...

- March 1
- April 30
- May 31
- July 1
- September 1

Year Two

- ___ Defend Thesis Proposal
- ___ Submit Annual Progress Report to Grad Office
- ___ Final Oral Examination
- ___ Submit Thesis

By...

- October 1
- July 1
- August 31
- Convocation Deadline

MA Thesis Proposal

Initial summary of proposal by May 1 of the first year and full proposal by October 31 of the second year

Purpose: The proposal should demonstrate that the candidate is able to work in a scholarly manner and is acquainted with the principal works on the subject of the thesis. As far as possible, the thesis proposal should be an original contribution.

	Action	Resource	Check
PROPOSAL DEFENSE PREPARATION	MA student identifies a Supervisor by March 1 of the first year, and begins to work with the Supervisor on the Thesis Proposal.		
	By May 1 of the first year, the Student submits a preliminary draft of their thesis proposal to the Supervisor.		
	Supervisor works with the student to identify an appropriate supervisory committee. The Supervisory Committee is the supervisor and two other faculty members (normally, one in Sociology and one outside).		
	Student distributes a full-length (typically 15-18 pages) Thesis Proposal to the Committee once the supervisor is satisfied with the preliminary proposal, and no later than September 1 of the 2 nd year.		
EXAM	Following submission of the final draft of the Thesis Proposal to the Committee, students must defend the proposal successfully in an oral examination. Students must complete the Thesis Proposal exam no later than October 1 of the 2nd year . The oral exam typically lasts 60 to 90 minutes, and is intended to ensure that a student is ready to proceed with the thesis project.	Master's Thesis Proposal	

MA Thesis Final Examination

To be completed by August 31 of the second year

Purpose: FGSR standards for an MA thesis stipulate “the thesis, at a minimum, should reveal that the student is able to work in a scholarly manner and is acquainted with the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. As far as possible, it should be an original contribution.”

Action		Resource	Check
THESIS PREPARATION	In collaboration with the Supervisor the Student works on the area of research presented in the Thesis Proposal examination.		
	Supervisor reads and provides timely feedback and guidance on thesis chapters and on the thesis as a whole. Members of the thesis committee provide review and input on draft portions as warranted.		
EXAM PREPARATION	At least <i>six weeks</i> ahead of time, the Supervisor arranges the date and time of the final exam and informs the Graduate Office by submitting the names and positions of two examination committee members (usually the same committee composition as in the proposal exam) along with the date and time of the examination.	MA Thesis Final Oral Defense Request form Examining Committee Membership	
	At least <i>one month</i> before the exam, the supervisor/student forwards the final thesis to all committee members.		
EXAM	The final exam is held, resulting in one of the following outcomes: adjourned, pass, pass subject to revisions, fail. The decision of the examining committee will be based both on the content of the thesis and on the candidate's ability to defend it.	See FGSR Website for rules and procedures governing the exam Decision of Master's Final Examination	
GRADUATION	Student applies for graduation on Bear Tracks and uploads thesis for FGSR review.	https://www.beartracks.ualberta.ca/ (See “Submitting Your MA or PhD Thesis” in this Handbook.)	

- MA Theses vary in length, but generally they are 80-100 pages.
- Final Exams typically last 1.5 to 2 hours. Each committee retains the right to establish its examination processes. A common procedure is to hold two rounds of questions, with each round of questions proceeding from the outside examiner to the supervisor.
- It is standard procedure for the candidate to leave the room at the beginning of the exam while the committee establishes and clarifies procedures, and to leave again at the conclusion of the exam during deliberations.

Master of Arts (Course-Based)

The full-time course-based master's program is an option to the thesis-based MA. It consists of an intensive year of graduate coursework, including a six-credit final capping project (Soc 900).

Course-Based MA Program Timeline

Year One

- ___ Identify the Supervisor
- ___ Complete Coursework
- ___ Define Project

By...

- December 1
- April 30
- May 1

Year Two

- ___ Register in SOC 900 Part I and Part II
- ___ Final Project Examination

By...

- Registration Deadline
- December 31

MA Course-Based Capping Project

By the end of the program

Purpose: The six-credit final capping project (Soc 900) has two parts spanning two terms (usually Fall and Winter): 1) a critical appraisal of the literature and formulation of a research topic in the subject area of interest; 2) a full research project (usually a proposal) that demonstrates the student's ability to work in a scholarly manner.

	Action	Resource	Check
COURSE WORK	Student works with the Associate Chair of Grad Studies (and the Supervisor, if known) to plan courses for the year.	MA Course-Based Program	
CAPPING PROJECT	By October of the first year in the program, the Student confirms a Supervisor for the capping project, and begins working with them to define, launch, and complete the capping project (concurrent with coursework) over two terms – usually Fall and Winter.		
	Student completes the project and submits to project supervisor.		
EXAM PREP	Supervisor asks another faculty member to act as second reader, and communicates the outcome to the student.		
EXAM	The project supervisor and second reader mark the project. The outcome of the exam is either pass with a grade of Complete (CR), or fail with no grade point value assigned (NC). Supervisor informs the Grad Office and student of the final outcome.		
GRAD	Student applies for graduation on Bear Tracks.	https://www.beartracks.ualberta.ca/	

Master of Arts (Course-Based) in Criminal Justice

The course-based master's program in criminal justice is normally a part-time program. It consists of 24 credits of graduate coursework plus a three-credit final capping project (SOC 900). Students have four years to complete the program.

MA Criminal Justice Program Timeline

Year One

- ☐ Identify the Supervisor
- ☐ Define Project

By...

- March 1
- April 30

Year Two and Beyond

- ☐ Complete coursework
- ☐ Complete Capping Project

MA Criminal Justice Capping Project

	Action	Resource	Check
COURSE WORK	Student works with the Associate Chair of Grad Studies (and the Supervisor, when known) to plan course schedule each year.	Master's Criminal Justice	
CAPPING PROJECT	Student confirms a Supervisor for the three-credit (Soc 900) capping project when (or before) they are within six credits of completing all other coursework. Student and supervisor work together to define, launch, and complete the capping project. The final capping project requires the student to critically review and analyze the literature on a criminal justice topic.		
	Student completes the project and submits to project supervisor.		
EXAM	Supervisor identifies another faculty member to act as second committee member, and arranges for the final oral exam.		
	Student completes an oral defense of the project with the two members of the supervisory committee. The outcome of the exam is either pass with a grade of Complete (CR), or fail with no grade point assigned (NC). Supervisor informs student and Grad Office of the final outcome.		
GRAD	Student applies for graduation on Bear Tracks.	https://www.beartracks.ualberta.ca/	

IV: Further Graduate Resources

~an Ongoing Collection of Suggested Readings~

General Information and Advice

57 Ways to Screw Up in Grad School (Haggerty and Doyle 2015, University of Chicago Press)

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT/ACPPU) Bulletin -
www.caut.ca/resources/publications

Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey - www.cags.ca/cgpss/

Chronicle of Higher Education – www.chronicle.com

Embracing Contraries in Research on Doctoral Education (2009, Special issue of *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*)

Hook and Eye: Fast feminism, slow academe – www.hookandeye.ca

“Of Heads and Hearts: Women in doctoral education at a Canadian university” (Wall 2008, *Women’s Studies International Forum*)

“The PhD program: Between conformity and reflexivity” (Raineri 2012, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*)

The Professor is In – www.theprofessorisin.com

So you want to Earn a PhD? The attraction, realities, and outcomes of pursuing a doctorate (Maldonado, Wiggers, and Arnold 2013, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario)

Supporting the Doctoral Process: Research-based strategies for doctoral students, supervisors and administrators (Amundsen and McAlpine 2011, Springer)

Supervision and Mentorship

“‘Becoming a Supervisor’: The impact of doctoral supervision on supervisors’ learning” (Halse 2011, *Studies in Higher Education*)

“Challenging the Dual Assumption of the ‘Always/Already’ Autonomous Student and Effective Supervisor” (Manathunga 2007, *Teaching in Higher Education*)

“A Consideration of the Challenges Involved in Supervising International Masters Students” (Brown 2007, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*)

“Doctoral Student Supervision in a Managerial Climate” (Crib and Gewirtz 2006, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*)

“Faculty-Graduate Student Mentoring Relationships: Mentors’ perceived roles and responsibilities” (Lechuga 2011, *Journal of Higher Education*)

“‘Learning Supervision’: trial by fire” (Amundsen and McAlpine 2009, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*)

"Mentoring Minority Graduate Students: issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students"
(Thomas, Willis, and Davis 2007, *Equal Opportunities International*)

"Supervision as Mentoring: The role of power and boundary crossing" (Manathunga 2007, *Studies in Continuing Education*)

"'Tell Me What to Do' vs. 'Guide Me Through It': Feedback experiences of international doctoral students" (Wang and Li 2011, *Active Learning in Higher Education*)

"What do Doctoral Students Value in their Ideal Mentor?" (Bell-Ellison and Dedrick 2008, *Research in Higher Education*)

Writing

Helping Doctoral Students Write: Pedagogies for supervision (Kamler and Thomson 2006, Routledge)

Practical Strategies for Pain-free Academic Writing (Shotwell – five-part workshop available on youtube)

Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals (Locke, Waneen, and Silverman 2007, Sage)

"Speaking of Writing: Supervisor feedback and the dissertation" (Paré 2011, in *Supporting the Doctoral Process*, Springer)

Writing for Social Scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book, or article (Becker 1986, University of Chicago Press)

Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks (Belcher 2009, Sage)

Exams

“Making Sense of the Doctoral Dissertation Defense: A student-experience-based perspective.” (Chen 2011, in *Supporting the Doctoral Process*, Springer)

Oral Exams: Preparing for and Passing Candidacy, Qualifying, and Graduate Defenses (Foote 2015, Academic Press)

Professionalization and Professional Development

Academic Street Smarts: Informal Professionalization of Graduate Students in Sociology (Shulman and Silver 2008, The American Sociological Association)

From Student to Scholar: A candid guide to becoming a professor (Cahn 2008, Columbia University Press)

Graduate Student Professional Development: A Survey with Recommendations (Rose 2012, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada)

How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment (Lamont 2009, Harvard University Press)

“The Identity Career of the Graduate Student: Professional socialization to academic sociology” (Adler and Adler 2005, *The American Sociologist*)

“Preparing the Professoriate of the Future: Graduate student socialization for faculty roles” (Austin and

McDaniels 2006, *Handbook of Theory and Research in Higher Education*)

“The Role of Relationships in the Transition from Doctoral Student to Independent Scholar” (Baker and Fifer 2011, *Studies in Continuing Education*)

Careers

Beyond Labs and Libraries: Career pathways for doctoral students. (Sekuler, Crow, and Annan 2013, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario)

“Parents on the Job Market: Resources and Strategies that Help Sociologists Attain Tenure-Track Jobs” (Kennelly and Spalter-Roth 2006, *The American Sociologist*)