

TEXAS  STATE[®]
SOCILOGY

Handbook

**MA with a Major in Sociology
MS with a Major in Applied Sociology**

2021-2022

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Director of Graduate Programs: Dr. David Dietrich
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For additional information, please refer to the Canvas site for Sociology and Applied Sociology Graduate Students and the [Graduate College](#) website.

I. INTRODUCTION

The standards set forth in this Handbook represent the requirements for the completion of two degrees in the Department of Sociology: The Master of Science with a Major in Applied Sociology (MS) and the Master of Arts with a Major in Sociology (MA). Beginning graduate students are expected to familiarize themselves with the standards for the degree they have chosen and be prepared to meet each requirement as they progress through the program. No rule specified in this Handbook may violate the standards set forth in the Graduate Catalog of Texas State University, but the standards of the Graduate Catalog represent minima, which may be increased at the discretion of the Department.

The two master's degrees differ somewhat in terms of their coursework, purpose, and post-graduation goals:

- A. The MS with a major in Applied Sociology focuses on evaluation skills including both qualitative and quantitative research, general statistical analysis, impact analysis, and grant writing. Graduates from the MS program will be qualified to fill positions including, but not limited to, market researcher, program evaluator, policy analyst, grant writer, and various positions requiring data gathering, analysis and interpretation. The MS culminates in a practicum. Students write a research practicum report based on research they conduct for an agency or organization. We also offer the MS with a non-thesis option in which students must complete three written comprehensive exams.
- B. The MA with a major in Sociology will prepare graduates for a career in a number of varied fields, including, but not limited to, corporate research, personnel work, administration, and data analysis. Students who are considering doctoral work should plan to complete the thesis. In the MA, the student's culminating thesis is an empirical research project that addresses a gap in the sociological literature.

II. ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

Applicants should refer to the Graduate College webpages (<http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/>) for information on application requirements.

III. DEGREE OUTLINE/AUDIT

At the time students enter one of the graduate programs in sociology, a degree audit will be prepared by the Graduate College. The degree audit indicates the hours of required graduate courses in sociology, elective graduate courses, and the minor area or cognate (if applicable).

FAQ: "What if I want to switch programs?"

- **SWITCHING FROM MA TO MS, OR MS TO MA:** Occasionally, students decide to switch programs after being accepted or after they have enrolled. Students who want to switch programs (e.g. from MA to MS), must consult with the graduate advisor in sociology about the process. Students who want to switch from the MA to MS or vice versa must reapply to the new program. Please let Dr. Dietrich know before you reapply and pay the application fee so that she can request that the application fee is waived. In order for the application fee to be waived, Dr.

Dietrich must contact the Graduate College after the student starts the application, *but before paying.* **If the fee is paid, it cannot be waived or refunded, no exceptions.**

- **SWITCHING FROM MS-PRACTICUM TRACK TO MS-NON-THESIS TRACK (OR VICE VERSA):** Students who want to switch from MS non-thesis to MS practicum or vice versa can do with the approval of the sociology graduate advisor and **do not** have to reapply.

IV. GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for the two graduate degrees in Sociology vary. The MS-practicum track requires course work plus a practicum, or site-based research project. The MS non-thesis track requires additional course work and the successful completion of three written comprehensive exams at the end of the program. The MA requires core course work plus the completion of a thesis. Your Degree Audit serves as your guide for planning courses.

A. THE MINOR OR COGNATE

The MS in Applied Sociology **does not** require a minor or cognate.

The MA in Sociology requires a [9 to 15-hour minor](#) or a 6-hour cognate. The requirements for the minor are set by the minor department; some minors require more classes than others. The student should consult with the graduate advisor of the proposed minor department to determine the exact requirements for that minor. The cognate is comprised of courses in any department outside of sociology. Students should consult with the sociology graduate advisor about appropriate courses for the cognate. They can take ANY two courses outside the department, as long as non-majors are permitted.

B. DIRECTED STUDIES

Directed studies (i.e., independent studies) courses are offered on a limited basis, and under specific conditions. The conditions under which these reading courses may be offered are limited to the following: (1) to prepare students for thesis/practicum work; (2) to support students who have a specific interest for which no formal course is offered; (3) to assist students in their last semester who have taken all sociology electives offered that semester, or (4) other reasons that are determined by the supervising faculty member in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Students must petition the faculty member in writing and provide a clear rationale for their directed study. Faculty members are not obligated to direct these courses and may reject students' requests for directed studies if there is no satisfactory or acceptable rationale for the course. If a directed study is approved by the professor, then students and faculty members should develop clear expectations, in writing, for the course objectives and assignments. To petition for a directed study, students must (1) complete the Directed Study Petition Form, available on the graduate student CANVAS site; (2) include a list of books or articles to be read; and (3) specify the work to be completed as a result of the directed study. Students must submit these documents to the faculty member who will be responsible for grading the proposed directed study and the graduate advisor, who will, in consultation, either approve or reject the petition.

V. THE MS PRACTICUM AND THE MA THESIS: EXPECTATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND POLICIES

A. EXPECTATIONS AND POLICY: PROGRESS IN THESIS A AND B

Expectations for completed theses and practicum reports are higher than those expectations in graduate classes. Students will receive suggestions, recommendations, and criticism about their writing and ideas. They will continue to submit revisions until those revisions meet the standards of the Department and the Graduate College. Committee chairs require a week or more to read and make suggestions on each draft. Drafts submitted to the chair must be proofread carefully; students should not submit rough drafts to the chair. Use of the American Sociological Association Style Guide (current edition) for citation and reference format is required by the Department of Sociology. Students cannot defend their thesis or practicum report until it meets Department and the Graduate College requirements and standards, and the committee approves the report. MA thesis and MS practicum students should refer to the checklists available on the Canvas site.

Theses and practica require that students interact with many groups in order to achieve their goals and objectives. Students are expected to be professional, respectful, civil, and mature in their interactions with faculty, staff, and students, and, when applicable, respondents, site supervisors, agency staff, and clients. Successful completion of the practicum or thesis is the student's responsibility. Students must identify and meet all deadlines and administrative work (e.g., signatures needed) related to the project and the defense. Deadlines are available on the Graduate College website.

DEPARTMENT POLICY: PROGRESS IN THESIS A AND THESIS B Effective August 1, 2021 for all MA Sociology majors

The Sociology Department is fully supportive of students making progress in Thesis A and B. All students must turn in evidence of progress to their thesis chair by the last class day of each semester/summer or else earn an F, unless there is a global pandemic or life emergency. Earning an F in Thesis A and/or B could potentially impact students' eligibility for financial aid, scholarships and/or GIA positions. Earning an F can also affect students' standing and potentially place them on Academic Probation or Suspension. It is each student's responsibility to make progress on their thesis. The department highly recommends that students: (1) communicate regularly with their committee chair; (2) set up a timeline and make progress each week; (3) make required revisions quickly and effectively; (4) find out about [deadlines](#) and plan accordingly; (5) read the Handbook and graduate student Canvas site about the thesis; (6) reply promptly to emails concerning your thesis from your committee chair, committee members, and the Director of Graduate Programs; and (7) utilize some of the many resources available (e.g., [The Writing Center](#), Graduate College [Shop Talks](#), Graduate College [thesis resources](#), etc.). Finally, ask us questions! If you are unsure of how to make progress or feel stuck in your writing, then seek out resources, and talk to your committee chair and the Director of Graduate Programs.

Evidence of progress includes, but is not limited to:

Thesis A

- Polished draft of thesis proposal (must include complete or mostly complete literature review, and methods)
- Completion of literature review

- Completion and/or submission of IRB application
- Completion of thesis proposal
- Evidence of all literature read (e.g., in an outline, spreadsheet, or table) with a bibliography
- Other evidence submitted in writing and determined by your thesis chair as indicating progress

Thesis B

- Completion of thesis proposal
- Completion of data collection
- Completion of data analysis
- Completion of one or more chapters in the thesis: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results or Findings, Conclusion/Discussion
- Completion of thesis
- Other evidence submitted in writing and determined by your thesis chair as indicating progress

B. SELECTION OF THE THESIS OR PRACTICUM COMMITTEE

Each student should consult with the graduate advisor before selecting a committee chair. The student should have ideas about his or her topic and an appropriate member of the graduate faculty to serve as committee chairperson and director of the practicum or thesis. The choice of committee chairperson for the practicum or thesis is determined by the faculty member's interest and specialization in the subject matter proposed by the student. After a discussion with the graduate advisor, the student may approach a faculty member and request to chair the committee; if the faculty member agrees to do so, he or she must provide written notification of that willingness to act as the thesis advisor before the student will be permitted to enroll in thesis courses (SOCI 5399A or 5399B) or practicum courses (SOCI 5398A or 5398B).

The committee chair will help the student select a committee to direct the thesis or practicum. A student must have the approval of the chairperson before consulting other faculty members to serve on the committee. The committee chair must be a regular graduate faculty member. Committee members can be regular or associate graduate faculty members. Refer to the [Graduate College website](#) for graduate faculty designations.

The MA-thesis committee consists of three faculty members: The committee chair and faculty member from sociology and one faculty member from outside the department. The chair should be someone whose area of specialization is related to the thesis topic. Students can find areas of specialization on the department homepage, faculty CVs, and Faculty Profiles.

The practicum committee consists of three sociology faculty members (no committee members from outside the department): The committee chair and two faculty members. The agency supervisor also helps to develop the project. Student questions about any part of the practicum should be directed towards the committee chair first.

C. MS PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

The student will complete a site-based applied research project, collecting data and/or analyzing existing

data and producing a final report. A practicum is an applied research project designed to help an agency or organization achieve its goals or objectives. Although students' practica will vary, students will combine the emphases of the program – sociological methods and statistics, needs assessment, impact analysis, and grant writing – with the collection and analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data. The goals of applied research and the practicum are organization or agency specific. The practicum is not an internship.

In order to identify a potential site to carry out the research for the practicum, the student should consult with the practicum chair, who will initiate contact with the potential site. **Students should not “cold call” agencies or organizations on their own.** The faculty supervisor will meet with the student and site supervisor to help determine the parameters, objectives, and timeline for the research. For some practica, the organization has data available for the student to organize and/or a clear plan for the student's work. For other practica, the committee chair and student will need to suggest possibilities for the agency or organization and explain the quantitative and/or qualitative types of projects that are possible. Some students will have contracts completed at the beginning of SOCI 5398A, others will complete the contract towards the end of 5398A. The timing of the contract completion, writing the literature review, and completing the research for the organization will vary depending on the organization's needs and timeline. The student should always consult with the committee chair with questions about the timeline. Students should also stay in close contact with their committee chair and the organization site supervisor about their progress.

Occasionally, students will conduct their practicum project where they work, with certain caveats. For example, what if the student identifies some weaknesses in the organization's practices? Will his or her supervisor be okay with “negative” findings? Be very certain that doing the practicum will not negatively affect your working relations with coworkers and supervisors.

The student, committee chair, and practicum site supervisor will write a *contract* that outlines exactly what the student will do for the agency, the timeline, the expectations, and the product (e.g. a presentation for the agency, an infographic for clients, etc.). Students and their committee chairs should write the contract by using the template that is available on the graduate student CANVAS site.

MS-practicum students cannot take 5398A and 5398 B in the same semester, except in exceptional cases and with approval of the committee chair and graduate advisor in sociology. In 5398A, students identify a practicum site, write the contract in consultation with their site supervisor and practicum chair, and begin research for the practicum. In 5398B, students complete the practicum report for their faculty committee, fulfill other responsibilities (for example, a presentation or report for the site), and defend their practicum to their sociology faculty committee.

Most practicum projects **do not** have to go through Institutional Review Board (IRB) review unless they are going to be presented at an academic conference or result in a publication in an academic journal. IRBs do not review projects that are used to evaluate an agency or organization's services. Projects must be submitted to the IRB if the student plans to present the results of the project at a conference or publish from the data. **Do not send anything to the IRB unless you have approval from your committee chair.**

We recommend that you read examples of previous practica reports and placements, which are available

on the Canvas site.

Members of the graduate faculty believe that departmental behavior predicts practicum behavior so that what students do in their classes and other department activities is directly related to successfully qualifying for practicum placement. In particular, faculty members expect potential practicum students to

1. Be on time to classes, meetings, and other required activities related to their roles as students;
2. Attend all classes, except in the case of illness, tragedy, or demonstrable emergencies;
3. Submit projects and assignments on time;
4. Submit high quality projects that have clearly gone through several drafts, with appropriate citations and bibliography; and
5. Demonstrate an ability to work with others, including the public, by being civil, patient, tolerant, and respectful, especially when disagreements arise.

Students must:

1. Discuss possible sites and projects with several faculty members, including the Director of Graduate Programs in the Sociology Department;
2. Ask one of those faculty members for ideas about site placement;
3. Develop, in consultation with the faculty member and practicum site employees, a significant, rigorous semester-long project that helps the agency pursue or achieve its goals;
4. Complete the practicum contract and initiate the project.

The Practicum Report: Report for the Agency vs. Report for the Committee and Department

Report for the agency: Most students will be asked to provide a summary or report to the agency or organization. That agency report will be different than the student's practicum report for the practicum committee. The agency report (if required) will probably not mention sociological theory. It will focus on information specific to the agency or organization: What did you find? What do you recommend based on your findings? This report should not include a literature review, unless the site supervisor has requested one. The report might be only 2-3 pages, with bullet point summaries and/or a Power Point presentation. Ask your site supervisor(s) if they want a report and if so, in what format.

Report for the faculty committee: The final report for the committee and department must include the following elements:

1. An introduction: The introduction describes the topic and explains why it is important to study. The student should focus on the agency's perspective regarding importance of the project and topic but he or she should also discuss the sociological significance. Students should not discuss why the topic is important to *them*; instead, they shall emphasize the sociological and practical relevance. Why is the research important for the agency?
2. A description of agency or organization: What does the agency do? What are the agency's objectives and/or mission? This section describes the organization and, if applicable, clients. It should provide background and context about the organization.

3. A literature Review: The MA thesis is designed by identifying a gap in the sociological literature. Do not take this approach with the practicum. The practicum report is designed by determining what the agency wants. This section should summarize some of the most important and relevant previous sociological studies, as they relate to the practicum. It should define all central concepts and discuss relevant theoretical frameworks.
4. The methodology: Which method(s) were employed for the practicum and why? The answer to this question depends on what the agency needs. Quantitative studies shall include a description of independent and dependent variables and how they will be operationalized. If applicable, include the survey questionnaire. Qualitative studies shall include a detailed discussion of sites, respondents, and the interview guide, if applicable. This section should discuss the sample, sampling procedure, and methods for securing access to the sample.
5. Reflection: What was it like to do applied research? What worked well? What would you do differently? How will you handle conducting applied research in the future? What are the most important things you learned?
6. A bibliography in ASA format
7. Appendices (if applicable, e.g., Interview guide, survey instrument, etc.)

D. MA THESIS GUIDELINES

Students should plan to meet with their chairs to discuss expectations and progress on the proposal. In 5399A, students should complete the thesis proposal, and get the proposal approved by the committee and start or complete the IRB application process. In 5399B, students should complete the thesis and defend the thesis. Note that there are different hours for the “B” course in this sequence (e.g., 5199B, 5399B, etc.). Students must take a minimum of 3 hours of thesis A and 3 hours of thesis B but then, if needed, may take more thesis B hours if their thesis chair approves additional thesis hours for their thesis research. MA students cannot take 5399A and 5399B in the same semester, except in exceptional cases.

The thesis is a major research project about a sociological topic. Students choose thesis topics based on their areas of interest in sociology and by identifying a significant empirical gap in the academic literature. The thesis must reflect a graduate level understanding of the topic and of sociology, as well as the ability to communicate that understanding on paper. The thesis is not about students’ personal beliefs, values, or opinions.

Students must also consult with their committee chair regarding human subjects review and the IRB application process. Most theses require IRB review for approval or exemption. Students must include in their planning the time required for IRB application review. They must ask their thesis committee chair to read and approve all documents required for the IRB application. Students should NOT send anything to the IRB without prior approval from the thesis committee chair. Students must complete the online CITI Program for “Social and Behavioral Students” before they can submit applications to the IRB for approval. Students should complete the CITI program during their first semester of the program. Students must write a thesis proposal. The proposal describes the proposed thesis study in detail. Because this document is a *proposal*, the project may change as a result of the feedback of the chair and committee. The committee chair will determine whether the project is appropriate for a master’s thesis.

Refer to the graduate student Canvas site for examples of previous students' thesis proposals. Thesis proposals must include the following items:

1. Introduction and rationale: Introduce the topic and explain why it is important to study. What is the sociological significance? What is the sociological rationale for conducting this research? Students should not discuss why the topic is important to *them*; instead, they shall emphasize the sociological relevance.
2. Literature review: What do sociologists already know about this topic? This section summarizes most of the relevant previous sociological studies, as they relate to the topic. It should define all central concepts and identify the gap in the literature. It should discuss how the proposed study fills that gap.
3. Theoretical framework(s): This section should describe the theoretical background of the main question. It will discuss the main theories that are relevant to the study. (Note: This document is a proposal; the theories employed in the completed thesis might change.)
4. Description of research questions or hypotheses and rationale.
5. Proposed methodology: Students must apply what have learned in methods courses to their study design. This section must discuss the proposed method and why this method is appropriate for the research questions or hypotheses. It must describe the proposed sample, sampling procedure, and how you will get access to your sample. It must indicate whether the project is under review at the IRB. Quantitative studies shall include a description of independent and dependent variables and how they will be operationalized. If applicable, the survey questionnaire will be part of the appendix. Qualitative studies shall include an explicit discussion of respondents or sites, and the interview guide, if applicable.
6. Proposed and realistic timeline
7. Bibliography (Use ASA format)
8. Appendices (if applicable):
 - a. Copy of IRB approval or exemption, when appropriate; most theses must have IRB approval or receive an IRB exemption. Students should consult with their committee chair about the IRB process.
 - b. Interview guide, survey instrument, etc.
 - c. Consent form

After the committee chair approves the proposal, the student must:

1. Submit the proposal to the committee members. After the committee approves the proposal, the student must complete the thesis proposal form (available on the Graduate College site under "Forms") and collect signatures.

2. Submit the thesis proposal with the IRB approval or exemption (if applicable) and thesis proposal form with the committee signatures to the department's graduate director for approval. If approved, the graduate director will forward the thesis and the proposal form to the department chair for his or her signature. The office staff will forward the signed and completed form and proposal to the Dean of the Graduate College for approval.

We recommend that you read examples of sociology student theses that are available via the library (<https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/135>). Some suggestions: Jon Beaubien, Fiona Burke, Katherine Casarez, Maggie Chamberlain, Tiffani Elliott, April Hudson, Megan Krou, Cindy Mays, Galina Mikhaylova, Alexis Hinojosa, Cassandra Rocha, Danni Rogina-Lopez, and/or Madison Tabersmith.

E. MA THESIS AND MS PRACTICUM: THE DEFENSE AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

If the chair approves the thesis or practicum report, then the student may send the thesis or report to the committee and set up the defense. The committee and other sociology department faculty and graduate students will attend the defense. Students should not invite friends, family members, significant others, or other people from outside the department. MS practica students should *not* invite their practicum site supervisor to this department defense.

The defense also serves as a time for the comprehensive exam. Students will not only present their thesis or practicum; they will also answer questions about their knowledge of empirical studies relevant to their topic, contemporary and classical sociological theories, qualitative and quantitative methods, and statistics. Thus, students should study and prepare to answer questions about each of these areas.

At the start of the defense, the student introduces herself or himself and discusses the main issues in the thesis or practicum for about 15-20 minutes (no longer). The PowerPoint presentation should outline the major ideas in the project. The defense is also considered an oral exam. The committee and other faculty present will ask questions about the thesis or practicum topics, specifically, and sociology (methods and theory), generally.

For MA and MS-practicum students, the comprehensive exam will cover the thesis or practicum report, as well as the student's mastery of sociology. The members of the student's thesis or practicum committee will constitute the final oral examination committee. They will be the only faculty members to decide whether the student passes the examination, although all members of the faculty are invited to attend the oral examination. The comprehensive examination cannot be held until after all members of the student's committee have read and approved the thesis or research report.

Before the defense, students must

1) Find a time when all committee members can meet and ask the graduate programs administrator (socigrad@txstate.edu) to reserve a room for the defense (unless the university is requiring remote or online defenses for pandemic or other reasons). For virtual defenses: The committee chair should set up the Zoom defense and send out invitations to the committee.

2) Send copies of the thesis or practicum report to the committee and confirm the date, time, and place

of the defense. Give the completed and polished thesis to the committee at least one week before the defense date.

3) Check the graduate school deadlines and plan carefully. **Note that practica are “in house”**; thus, *practicum defense dates* may be scheduled later than *thesis defense dates* listed on the Graduate College webpage. The practicum defense must be scheduled at least 7 days prior to comprehensive exam deadlines listed on the Graduate College website.

4) E-mail the thesis or practicum title, abstract, and names of committee members, to the sociology graduate programs administrator at socigrad@txstate.edu at least one week prior to the scheduled defense date. Study previous course notes and materials (particularly from statistics, methods, and theory) in order to prepare for questions during the defense.

The day of the defense, students must

1) Arrive early. Ask an office staff member to assist with computer set-up if needed. For virtual defenses, the committee chair should set up the Zoom (or other) electronic invitation at least a week prior to the defense.

2) Confirm that the committee chair will take the student's [forms](#) with committee signatures to the graduate advisor's office in the sociology department after the defense. The committee will sign the form if the student has successfully defended. For virtual defenses, Ms. Lindy Warner will create and circulate forms electronically UNLESS she is on leave. In that case, the student and committee chair must create forms, gather signatures, and ensure that forms are submitted to the Graduate College before the [deadlines](#).

Forms for the practicum that must be completed: (1) Student learning outcome form, completed by the committee and submitted to socigrad@txstate.edu; (2) Comprehensive Exam Form, completed by the committee chair and submitted to the Graduate College, gcdegspcl@txstate.edu.

Forms for the thesis that must be completed: (1) Student learning outcome form, completed by the committee and submitted to socigrad@txstate.edu; (2) Comprehensive Exam Form, completed by the committee chair and submitted to the Graduate College, gcdegspcl@txstate.edu; and, (3) Thesis Submission Approval Form, completed by the student and submitted to the Graduate College, gcdegspcl@txstate.edu.

After the defense, students must

1) Complete revisions to the thesis or practicum and send the final document to the committee chair for his or her final approval. Most students have required revisions and edits to complete before submission.

2) Confirm the correct format. The MA-thesis must follow the correct Graduate College format **exactly**. Details about confirming format, proofreading, etc. are the student's responsibility. Attend Graduate College Shop Talks about the thesis process. Read the Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines available on the Graduate College website. Be aware of graduate school deadlines (located on the Graduate College website: <http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation.html>). Correspond with the Graduate College about formatting questions.

3) Theses must be submitted electronically to the library by the Graduate College deadline. Practicum reports must be submitted electronically and in hard copy to the graduate advisor in sociology. The practicum report ***should not*** be sent to the library or Graduate College.

4) Complete the online exit interview for the sociology department.

5) Celebrate this fine accomplishment.

F. APPEAL PROCESS: PRACTICA AND THESIS DEFENSES

If a student takes issue with the committee's decision on the comprehensive exam, the following process will be employed to appeal that decision.

1. The student must notify the members of the committee in writing within 7 working days of the decision that the student requests the committee to reconsider its decision. The student should identify specific points or issues to be reconsidered by the committee.

2. The committee has 7 working days after receiving the request to respond to the student in writing.

3. If no satisfactory conclusion can be reached at this level, the student may appeal in writing to the Chair of Sociology Department.

4. The chair has 7 working days after receiving the request to respond to the student in writing.

Students found guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to the disciplinary action specified in the Texas State Student Handbook and in the University's Honor Code. The Canvas site contains numerous resources on avoiding plagiarism. Unintentional plagiarism has the same consequences as intentional plagiarism.

VI. MS IN APPLIED SOCIOLOGY: NON-THESIS TRACK

Students who pursue the MS non-thesis option must complete all course work satisfactorily and pass a written comprehensive exam on classical and contemporary theorists, statistics, and qualitative and quantitative methods at the end of the program. **Students must complete the exams in their last semester of coursework or the next (subsequent) semester** (exceptions can be made with the permission of the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology and only for extreme emergencies). Students will be expected to be knowledgeable about material from all sociology courses they have completed and be able to discuss and apply theory, statistics, and methods to substantive areas. The exam is fully online and answers are submitted via a Comprehensive Exam Canvas site. All of the exam answers should also demonstrate the student's knowledge of relevant literature and empirical areas in the student's coursework.

A. SCHEDULING EXAMS

In order to schedule and complete written comprehensive exams, students in the MS Non-thesis track must contact the Director of Graduate Programs **by the second Friday of the semester in which they want to complete exams**. Refer to the Canvas site under "MS-Non-thesis Comprehensive Exams" for details and additional handouts and information.

Refer to the graduate student Canvas site module on Applied Sociology-non-thesis comprehensive exams. It is students' responsibility to keep books, notes, and syllabi from their theory, research methods, and statistics courses. In their last semester or the semester or summer directly after they complete coursework, students must complete a written take-home exam, which will be assessed on a pass/fail basis by a committee of graduate faculty. In order to schedule and complete written comprehensive exams, students must contact the Director of Graduate Programs, Dr. David Dietrich (dd34@txstate.edu), by the second Friday of the semester or first Friday of the summer in which they want to complete exams. Dr. Dietrich will select the evaluating committee for the students' exam and inform the student once the committee is finalized.

The written take-home exam typically consists of 5-7 questions. The exam will assess students' understanding and application of statistics, quantitative and qualitative methods, and contemporary and classic sociological theories. Students are permitted to use their notes, reading materials from their coursework, and other published sociological books, articles, and chapters in order to complete this exam. The answers must be uploaded on the Applied Sociology Comprehensive Exam Canvas site.

DATES OF EXAM: Students will receive the exam on March 10 (spring), June 10 (summer), or October 10 (fall).

You have 14 days from the date that Dr. Dietrich opens the exam on the Canvas site to complete the answers and post the answers in the folder with your name on the Applied Sociology Comprehensive Exam Canvas site (NOT the Applied Sociology and Sociology graduate student site). You must use your sociology course material and other sociological references (books, articles, etc.) to answer these questions. Each answer should be approximately 6-7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, and written in essay format (complete sentences, organized into paragraphs, etc.). Refer to the rubric so you understand how your answers will be evaluated. Faculty will utilize the rubric when evaluating your exam. The more specific examples from readings, the stronger your answer (although paraphrase as much as possible; only 1-2 direct quotes per page). Incorporate as much evidence from your course and outside readings as you can. The questions allow you to show your mastery of all the material you have covered during your degree. **Please be sure to submit all answers to your comprehensive exam in one document when you upload them to the Comprehensive Exam Canvas site.** For example, if you are required to answer five questions, you should upload ONE document with answers to all five questions, **NOT** five separate documents. Submit your proofread, polished, and complete answers via the Canvas site in Assignments. Answers will be reviewed via *Turn It In*. The comprehensive exam committee will contact the student with their assessment of the exam 7-8 days after the students has submitted the exam answers.

Citation guidelines, avoiding plagiarism, and academic (dis)honesty: Do not use websites, Wikipedia, dictionaries or encyclopedias in your answers. Cite only academic books, articles, and book chapters. Include a bibliography. Use ASA format for citations and your bibliography.

This is an open book, open notes exam, but you must not collaborate with current or former classmates. You must work independently. You must not discuss your exam or share notes or outlines or any sort with others in the program. Finally, you are not permitted to share exam questions or answers with current or former students.

Academic dishonesty refers to a variety of transgressions such as cheating on a test to committing plagiarism for a written assignment. Faculty at Texas State University assume that it is the responsibility of each student to know what constitutes academic dishonesty. University statements regarding academic dishonesty can be found in the Texas State Handbook, the University PPS, and on the MSDA Canvas site. In general: **when in doubt, cite. If it's not your idea, you must cite it.** If you paraphrase an idea, you must cite the author. If you take a direct quote (three consecutive words or more) from a source, you must place direct quotes around the quote, provide a page number (if applicable), and cite the author. Be very careful about taking information from authors' literature reviews. If you find yourself thinking, "I wonder whether this is academic dishonesty," then it probably is. *Unintentional plagiarism has the same consequences as intentional plagiarism.* Students often engage in the former, so the general guideline (when in doubt, cite) is useful to follow. Refer to the [library site](#) and read more about [avoiding plagiarism](#).

Evaluation of Comprehensive Exam Answers: A committee of graduate faculty will evaluate content, insight, correct application of course material, empirical evidence, and citations/sources to determine whether the answers pass or fail.

The committee will also examine the answers to ensure that they adhere to our University's [Honor Code](#). If a student appears to have violated the Honor Code, it is the up to the discretion of the student's committee to decide on the extent of the violation and whether to report the student to the university Honor Code Council for a violation or violations. If a student fails an answer or answers, he or she will be asked by the comprehensive exam committee chair to consult readings, re-write and re-submit answers to *the committee chair or via Canvas (consult with the chair about his or her preferences)* within 7 days of receiving the committee's evaluation. The committee will then evaluate the student's revision. If a student does not pass the second attempt, then he or she will not be able to graduate in that particular semester. The student will have to reapply for graduation and will be required to return for the next long semester (fall or spring) after studying for comprehensive exams and take comprehensive exams in one or more areas during that subsequent long semester. The committee will provide the students with suggestions for improvement. The committee can also request that students take additional course work, complete individual directed readings, clinical studies or reviews, complete individual research in specified areas, and/or other assignments that would be appropriate for assisting the student. A new faculty committee will then evaluate the student's third attempt at answering the comprehensive exam questions successfully.

If the student fails the third attempt, then he or she will not be able to graduate with the Applied Sociology degree. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the committee at this point, then the student can submit a written appeal to the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology, who will consult with the Graduate Steering Committee about the next course of action.

EVALUATION RUBRIC

The student's committee will utilize this rubric in order to evaluate whether the student passes, fails, and/or needs to rewrite one or more questions. A fail on one or more questions requires a rewrite within one week of receiving feedback from the committee chair.

RUBRIC FOR ALL QUESTIONS (EXCEPT QUESTION ON SPSS OUTPUT)

| Each question | Pass (earns the equivalent of 70% or above) | Fail (earns the equivalent of 69% or below) | Pass/fail |
|--|---|--|------------------|
| Theories, perspectives, methods, and concepts | Identifies appropriate and relevant theories, perspectives, and/or concepts. Discusses theories, perspectives, and/or concepts with high aptitude. | Did not identify appropriate and relevant theories, perspectives and/or concepts. Some discussions are inaccurate or limited. | |
| Scholarly literature | Identifies relevant scholarly literature in sociology Review of the literature is thorough (4 or more references per answer). | Did not identify relevant scholarly literature. Relies on only 1-3 sources per answer (chapters or articles). | |
| Technical Aspects: Grammar, organization, citations | Very few grammatical errors and/or misspellings. All or most paragraphs are organized. Uses ASA citation format. Source material is used accurately. There is an introduction and conclusion. | Several grammatical errors and/or misspellings. Several paragraphs are disorganized. Unclear or inconsistent citation format. Several incorrect or missing citations. No introduction and/or conclusion. | |
| Overall accuracy and analysis | The answer is accurate, logical, complete, and synthesized. | Several inaccurate sentences. Incomplete ideas. Answers are not analytical. | |

RUBRIC for Exam Question on Interpreting SPSS Output

1. Interpreted accurately (pass)
2. Interpreted somewhat accurately (pass)
3. Interpreted mostly inaccurately (does not pass/requires rewrite)
4. Interpreted inaccurately (does not a pass/requires rewrite)

B. HOW TO PREPARE

You should start studying the semester before you take your exams-not the month before. You must study your books and notes from your courses, particularly theory, statistics, quantitative methods, and qualitative methods. The essay questions are broad questions that allow you to draw on much of your coursework. You should incorporate as much evidence from your graduate coursework as possible. Be sure to study your graduate syllabi course readings. **Your statistics, methods, and theory syllabi serve as review sheets for you.** Some syllabi are saved on the Canvas site in resources for MS non-thesis. If you can't find your books or notes, go to Half Price Books and buy some inexpensive sociology research methods books and sociological theory books.

Statistics: Refer to the Canvas site for the review sheet for statistics. We will provide you with some SPSS output and ask you to interpret the output but we will not ask you to do any calculations. For a great review of statistics--buy a used copy of Dr. Sally Caldwell's excellent book, *Statistics Unplugged*. You must incorporate literature and authors you have read about in your courses.

Theory: Be able to compare strengths, weaknesses, assumptions, main concepts, and main contributions of at least three classic and contemporary theorists associated with symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and conflict theory. You must be able to apply contemporary and classic theories to a current event. You must be able to write about (in detail) and apply the major concepts of theorists. Marx, DuBois, Weber, and/or Durkheim will be on the exam in some form. Be able to write about at least three contemporary theorists (e.g., West and Zimmerman's doing gender theory, Goffman's dramaturgy)..

Methods: Be able to compare the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods. Know differences between sampling, methods, research design, analysis and interpretation etc. Be able to write about specific types of qualitative and quantitative research methods, and the different components of each type. Be able to write about ethical issues involved in sociological research.

C. EXPECTATIONS

You will have two weeks to complete your exam. Incorporate as much specific evidence as possible and when possible. Also, incorporate some empirical research. For example, if you are asked to discuss some aspect of qualitative methods, then discuss it fully, with names of qualitative researchers (e.g., Adler and Adler). When possible, for each exam question, include an area that YOU have researched e.g., "Qualitative research by Orne suggests that coming out is a highly contextualized process. In his qualitative analysis of..." or "According to Joan Acker, organizations are gendered, which means that..."

The strongest answers on comprehensive exams include specific information, specific researchers, and specific literature. For example, instead of simply referring to conflict theory, students should mention a specific theorist with his or her assumptions and/or unique contributions. You must cite. Include a bibliography in ASA format.

D. EXAM EVALUATION: A rotating committee of graduate faculty will write, administer, and evaluate the comprehensive written exam. The committee will evaluate exam answers for the following: content, insight, correct application of course material, empirical evidence, and citations/sources to determine whether the answers pass or fail. Additionally, the committee will examine the answers to ensure that they adhere to our University's Honor Code (see <http://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/>). If a student appears to have violated the Honor Code, it is the up to the discretion of the student's committee to decide on the extent of the violation and whether to report the student to the university Honor Code Council for a violation or violations.

On the first attempt at an exam, if a student fails an answer or answers, he or she will be asked to consult readings, re-write and re-submit answers to the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology within 7

days of receiving the committee's evaluation. If a student does not pass the second attempt, then he or she will not be able to graduate in that particular semester. He or she will have to reapply for graduation and will be required to return for the next long semester (fall or spring) after studying for comprehensive exams and take comprehensive exams in one or more areas during that subsequent long semester. A new faculty committee will then evaluate the student's third attempt at answering the comprehensive exam questions successfully. At this point, the student must sign a form that indicates the student's understanding that the third attempt is the final attempt. If the student fails the third attempt, then he or she will not be able to graduate with the MS degree in our department.

E. GC 5100: Students who have ONLY comprehensive exams to complete and who have completed all coursework (i.e., are taking only comprehensive exams in a semester without taking any other courses) will be required to take a one-hour comprehensive exam course, GC 5100. This is not a course that meets and it does not affect GPA; it simply allows students to access campus resources during their final semester. Because the course is one-hour, it will not be eligible for financial aid. Students in this situation will have to pay out of pocket for the one-hour course. Hence, if possible, we recommend that students complete their comp exams during their last semester of coursework. Contact the Director of Graduate Programs in order to register for GC 5100.

VII. ENROLLMENT AND COURSE CREDIT

Any graduate student receiving supervision or assistance on a practicum report or a thesis must be registered for the appropriate course during that semester. Failure to register for either the practicum or thesis course in a semester in which assistance is received may result in postponement of graduation. The initial enrollment for the practicum is under Sociology 5398A, and for the thesis is under Sociology 5399A. All subsequent enrollments for the practicum or thesis are under Sociology 5398B or Sociology 5399B, respectively (Students may also take 5199B, 5699B etc. depending on the hours they need). In any semester in which the research report or thesis is not completed, the committee chair assigns a grade of "PR" (in progress) or "F" if the progress is unsatisfactory.

VIII. APPLYING FOR GRADUATION

Apply for graduation during the first week of the semester you plan to graduate. Check the Graduate College website for deadlines and plan carefully. There are no exceptions to these deadlines.

IX. THE CONDUCT OF INQUIRY

Both the practicum report and the thesis must demonstrate scholarship. Each should serve as a "showcase" for the student's abilities and knowledge in the academic discipline of sociology. Citation and bibliographic entries must follow the format set by the American Sociological Association (ASA). Information about the ASA format is available in the Department, at the ASA web site <<http://www.asanet.org/>> and in the latest edition of the ASA Style Guide.

XI. DEADLINES

The Graduate College sets all official deadlines. Consult the Graduate College webpage for the semester in which you plan to graduate. Adhering to deadlines is the student's responsibility.

XII. DEPARTMENT POLICY: STUDENT FITNESS AND PERFORMANCE

Students enrolled in all academic programs in the Department of Sociology must maintain high scholastic standards and develop a mastery of the knowledge and methods of the discipline.

Students are expected to demonstrate emotional and mental fitness in their interactions with others, use skills and methods that are generally accepted by others in the profession, and conform to the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics, the Texas State University Honor Code, and the Texas State University Code of Student Conduct. A student's acceptance in any program does not guarantee the student's fitness to remain in that program. The faculty is responsible for insuring that only those students who continue to meet program standards are allowed to continue in any program.