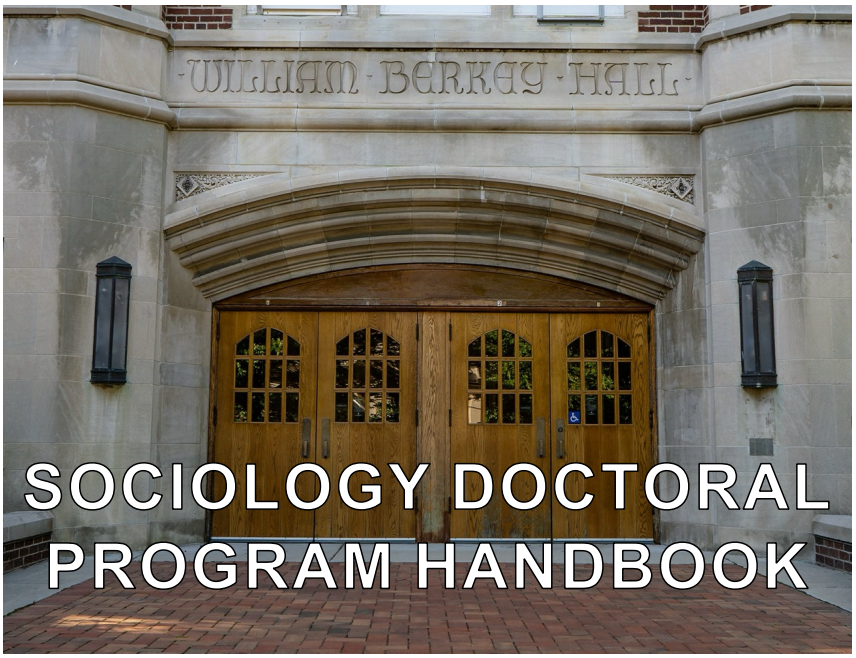
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
2025-2026 ACADEMIC YEAR



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List of Commonly Used Acronyms

APC	Academic Program Coordinator
APR	Annual Progress Report
ASA	American Sociological Association
CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
COGS	Council of Graduate Students
DCF	Dissertation Completion Fellowship
ELC	English Language Center
ETDs	Electronic Theses and Dissertations
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
GPA	Grade Point Average
GEC	Graduate Education Committee
GEU	Graduate Employees Union
GOF	Graduate Office Fellowship
GPD	Graduate Program Director
GRA	Graduate Research Assistant
GSRR	Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities
GTA	Graduate Teaching Assistant
GTE	Graduate Teaching-Excluded Assistant
HRPP	Human Research Protection Program
HR	Human Resources
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSU	Michigan State University
ORA	Office of Regulatory Affairs
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
RECR	Responsible Conduct of Research
RVSM	Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct
SEAD	Statement of Employee Accommodation Determination
SSC	College of Social Science
SOC	Department of Sociology
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
URO	University Research Organization
UPD	Undergraduate Program Director

1. Program Overview

Welcome to the Sociology Doctoral Program in the Department of Sociology (SOC) in the College of Social Science (SSC) at Michigan State University (MSU)!

In 1924, Michigan State College (MSC) President Kenyon L. Butterfield created the School of Liberal Arts, with the Department of Sociology (SOC) as a founding department. A year later, SOC Chair Eben Mumford launched the SOC Doctoral Program, making SOC the eighth department in MSC and the first department in the School of Liberal Arts with a doctoral degree conferral authority. Over its first four decades, our SOC Doctoral Program earned a reputation as a top-tier doctoral program, producing a notable percentage of US SOC PhDs skilled especially in health equity and social disparities, international migration, and human-environment interaction. While we have always had faculty and graduate students doing work in the intersections of race-class-gender-sexuality, we have recently strengthened our departmental expertise in this area.

In recent years, we have formalized the set of core **values** we want to guide our department going forward and (b) our department's **mission** statement.

MSU Sociology endorses our core values when fulfilling our mission and striving to realize our vision.

- We foster a collaborative intellectual community that supports rigorous and impactful scholarship.
- We advance social justice and challenge power structures through our research, teaching, and engagement.
- We employ collective decision-making processes based on transparency, accountability, and equitable access to and distribution of resources and responsibilities.
- We cultivate a climate based in mutual support, trust, and respect to support institutional accessibility for all faculty, staff, and students.
- We perform mentoring and teaching that strengthen our collective identity as professional sociologists.

MSU Sociology addresses major societal challenges through:

- generating high-quality research;
- facilitating lifelong learning; and
- performing impactful engagement.

Throughout the history of our SOC Doctoral Program, our **principal goal** has been to **prepare professional sociologists for scholarly careers in research, education, and service**. We do this by grounding our students in the disciplinary core of sociology, emphasizing its epistemological origins, classical and contemporary theories, and suite of rigorous methodological and analytical techniques. While our Graduate Faculty have research interests in a broad range of substantive areas represented within our discipline's flagship professional society (the American Sociological Association or ASA), we have identified three signature areas for our Department and Doctoral Program: health, medicine, and the body; environment, migration, and movements; and race, class, gender, and sexuality. We expect that each PhD student will develop sociological depth in one or more of these signature areas.

Our Doctoral Program has four curricular learning outcomes associated with those skills necessary for success as a professional sociologist. **Upon completion of the SOC Doctoral Program, degree recipients will be able to**:

- demonstrate broad theoretical and substantive sociological knowledge and demonstrate deep scholarly understanding within one or more fields sociological sub-disciplines;
- communicate effectively—through speaking and writing—about sociological concepts, theories, methods, and evidence;
- conduct original, independent, and publishable research in their selected sociological sub-discipline(s); and
- teach undergraduate and graduate courses in core sociological areas and in selected sociological sub-disciplines.

Students will form and work closely with their Guidance Committee in designing their specific program of study from their coursework through their comprehensive exam to the successful completion and defense of their dissertation. Students will regularly communicate with their Guidance Committee about their coursework, progress through the Doctoral Program, and career planning.

Students are expected to:

- participate in all departmental colloquia, public presentations, and other sponsored events, including but not limited to:
  - Qualifying Paper presentations,
  - Monthly proseminars
  - Dissertation proposal defenses,
  - Dissertation defenses, and
  - research talks by faculty job candidates and guest speakers;
- demonstrate mastery of course content within the core of sociology and within their signature area of expertise;

- complete required Professional Development Workshops and Responsible Conduct of Research Workshops;
- present their work in department colloquia and regional, national, and/or international professional conferences; and
- complete their Qualifying Paper, Comprehensive Exam, Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Proposal Defense, and Dissertation and Dissertation Defense.

In addition, we offer an abundance of opportunities for doctoral students to participate in shared academic governance in and for the Department. Scheduled departmental meetings—unless otherwise noted—are open to all departmental members. Further, Table 1 on the next page identifies those Department, College, and University committees, boards, and councils for which we have doctoral student representatives—in line with Article 6 of MSU's Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities).

Table 1: SOC Representation on Department, College, and University Committees, Boards, and Councils

		Committee Composition*			
Department Committee	**Committee Chair**	**T-S Faculty**	**T-F Faculty**	**PhD Student**	**UG Student**
Departmental Advisory Committee	elected by committee	5	1	1	1
Access, Opportunity, and Excellence Committee**	SOC AOE Coordinator	2	1	2	1
Undergraduate Education Committee***	SOC UPD	2	2	1	1
Graduate Education Committee****	SOC GPD	4	0	2	0
Sociology Research Speakers Series Ad Hoc Committee *****	named by SOC Chair	3	1	2	1
College Committee	**Committee Chair**	**T-S Faculty**	**T-F Faculty**	**PhD Student**	**UG Student**
Hearing Board		1		1	
University Committee	**Committee Chair**	**T-S Faculty**	**T-F Faculty**	**PhD Student**	**UG Student**
Council of Graduate Students (COGS)		~~1~~		1	

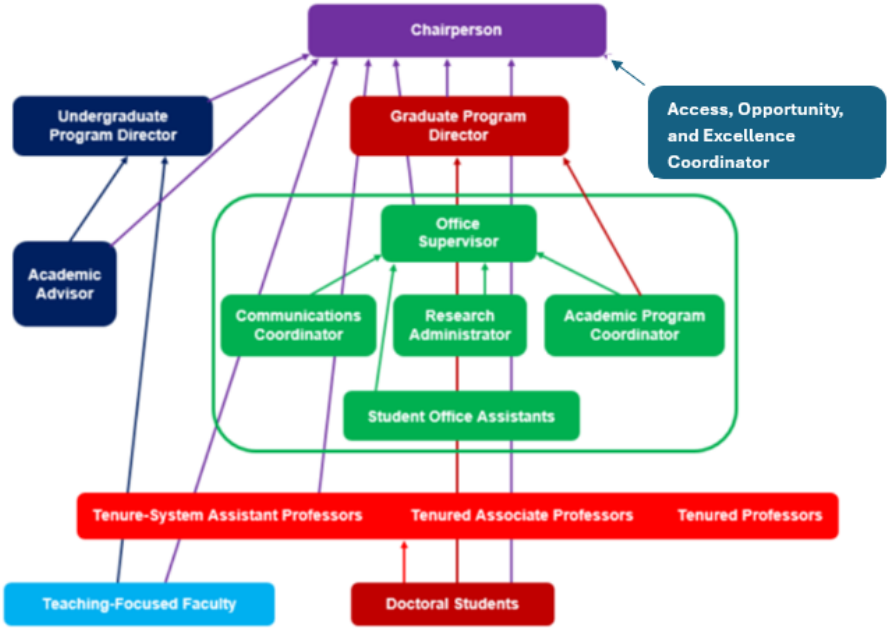
* Tenure-System Faculty=T-S Faculty; Teaching-Focused Faculty=T-F Faculty; Undergrad Student=UG Student

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Figure 2 below displays the general organization of the Department, at least as it pertains to the primary lines of administrative reporting and personnel oversight and evaluation. The SOC Chairperson is a full-time administrator, who has final authority on personnel, budgetary, and policy decisions. They are assisted by an Undergraduate Program Director (UPD), Graduate Program Director (GPD), and Institutional Access Coordinator, who are drawn from the departmental faculty. The Department is supported by office staff, who are led by our Office Supervisor.

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Figure 2: Department of Sociology Organizational Chart



This **Doctoral Program Handbook** contains information about Department, College, and University policies that provide guidance for students embarking on their doctoral study. Students also should seek out additional information from other resources essential to their doctoral study and professional careers. Example of these resources include:

- the Registrar's Office Academic Programs Catalog: (https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/), especially:
  - Costs (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s415);

- Graduate Education (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/TextAll.aspx?Section=111)
- General Procedures and Regulations https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112
- Policy on Research with Human Subjects (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s597);

- *Spartan Life*, MSU's student handbook, (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/index.html), especially:
  - Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html);
  - General Student Regulations (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/index.html) and
- Academic Rights and Responsibilities (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/article-two-academic-rights-and-responsibilities-for-graduate-students.html);
- Council of Graduate Students (https://cogs.msu.edu/);
- The Graduate School (https://grad.msu.edu/);
- The College of Social Science (https://socialscience.msu.edu/graduate/index.html)

We strongly encourage that students become familiar with these resources prior to entering the program and during the first year of enrollment at the University.

The SOC GPD is responsible for assisting students with the policies and procedures contained in this handbook. This is especially important in the first year of enrollment in the SOC Doctoral Program. Students should take the initiative during their first year to learn more about the Department of Sociology, our Graduate Faculty, and our Doctoral Program. Doing so will create early opportunities for professional socialization and scholarly development that students will build upon as they complete their doctoral study and embark on professional careers.

Clearly understanding the program requirements is essential for success in the SOC Doctoral Program. The contents of this SOC Doctoral Program Handbook detail the Doctoral Program's structure, course requirements, expected timing of program benchmarks, student responsibilities, expectations regarding academic performance and professional integrity, and career development as a sociologist. Familiarity with all facets of the SOC Doctoral Program, along with related College and University policies and procedures, is a vital component of professional development.

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2. Program Components

The SOC Doctoral Program provides students with a strong foundation in the disciplinary core of sociological theories, methods, and analytical techniques along with substantive depth and expertise in one or more sub-disciplinary signature areas. Students must develop and complete a program of study that meets Department, College, and University requirements. The program of study includes the following requirements:

- 60 credits of coursework;
- Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop;
- Professional Seminar (Prosem) Series;
- Training in Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR);
- Qualifying Paper and presentation;
- Comprehensive Examination;
- Dissertation Proposal defense;
- Dissertation defense; and
- GradPlan.

Table 2 at the end of Section 3 displays these program requirements along with the expected timing when students fulfill these requirements.

2.1. 60 Credits of Coursework

2.1.1. Core Courses in Theory, Methods, and Statistics

All doctoral students are required to complete SOC 815: Classical Sociological Theory; SOC 816: Contemporary Sociological Theory; SOC 881: Analysis of Social Data I; SOC 882: Analysis of Social Data II; and SOC 885: Methods of Sociological Inquiry. Students must earn a 3.0 grade or higher in each of these courses to obtain the PhD.

2.1.2. Additional Courses in Advanced Methods and/or Analyses

All doctoral students are required to complete two advanced methods or analyses courses. Options include: SOC 883: Multi-Equation Quantitative Models; SOC 884: Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis; SOC 985: Qualitative Field Research; SOC 986: Survey Research Principles; or another 800- or 900-level advanced methods/analyses course approved by the student's Guidance Committee. Students must earn a 3.0 grade or higher in both advanced methods or analyses courses to obtain the PhD.

2.1.3. Courses in or Related to Signature Area

All doctoral students are required to complete at least five courses in or related to their Signature Area. No more than two courses outside of SOC (not counting those cross-listed in SOC) can count toward the doctoral degree without approval of the student's Guidance Committee and the SOC GPD. Graduate students and their Guidance Committees jointly decide course selection for the student's program of study. Students must earn a 3.0 grade or higher in at least three of these five courses to obtain the PhD.

2.1.4. Dissertation Credits

All doctoral students are required to complete at least 24 dissertation credits (SOC 999) to earn their PhD. Students should register for these SOC 999 credits as soon as they begin their pre-dissertation research. Department approval is required for enrollment. The maximum number of dissertation credits allowed is 36.

2.2. Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop

All first-year doctoral students are required to participate in the entirety of the SOC Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Workshop held prior to the start of fall semester. International doctoral students also must attend the university-wide International GTA Program usually held in early to mid-August. International doctoral students also are expected to pass the MSU Speaking Test (https://elc.msu.edu/tests/msu-speaking-test/) to be eligible for a departmental Graduate Teaching Assistantship.

2.3. Professional Development Workshop Series

All doctoral students are required to participate in SOC Professional Development events and activities during their graduate study. SOC typically offers 2-3 workshops each semester on a range of professional development topics. All doctoral students are expected to fully participate in at least ten workshops during their graduate study. There may be monthly Professional Seminar (prosem) meetings that all doctoral students are expected to attend. Professional development also includes expectations that graduate students will regularly attend departmental meetings, dissertation defenses, job candidate presentations, and departmental guest lecture/speaker presentations.

2.4. Training in Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR)

To continue to produce cutting-edge research and research in accordance with national standards and regulations, MSU requires that all doctoral students complete training in the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR). This training covers general guidelines and requirements specific to individual graduate programs. Completion of this training must be documented in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/) and Ability LMS (https://abilitylms.msu.edu). This RECR requirement for all SOC doctoral students is listed below. (Certain external funding agencies may require researchers to obtain additional RECR training, beyond that mentioned below, related to the timeline and

content of a specific grant project). Additionally, all researchers conducting studies that require MSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval must meet the training requirements for human subjects' research protection offered by MSU's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP).

Section 8 provides additional information about RECR training requirements. Also see the Graduation School's guidance on research integrity (https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity and https://grad.msu.edu/recr).

2.4.1. Year One

By the end of the fall semester of their first year, all doctoral students must complete four Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program modules:

- Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research;
- Authorship;
- Plagiarism; and
- Research Misconduct.

Ability LMS automatically tracks and documents these completed modules.

By May 15th of their first year, all doctoral students also must complete three required hours of discussion-based training. These may include:

- Graduate School RECR workshops;
- Department of Sociology RECR workshops;
- SOC 885 course meetings that deal with RECR issues; and
- SOC 985 and/or SOC 986 course meetings that deal with RECR issues.

Doctoral students must document these three hours in GradPlan.

2.4.2. Year Two

By May 15th of their second year, all doctoral students must complete:

- three of the following CITI Program modules: Collaborative Research; Conflicts of Interest; Data Management; Mentoring; Peer Review; and Financial Responsibility; and
- three required hours of discussion-based training.

Ability LMS automatically tracks and documents the three additional completed modules; doctoral students must document their three required hours of discussion-based training in GradPlan. Students may complete the latter via a combination of the four options above.

2.4.3. Year Three and Beyond

By May 15th of each additional year, all doctoral students must complete three hours of refresher training. These may include, but are not limited to:

- additional CITI Program modules and refreshers (count for 45 minutes each);
- additional Graduate School RECR workshops;

- additional Department of Sociology RECR workshops;
- additional SOC 885 course meetings that deal with RECR issues; and
- additional SOC 985 and/or SOC 986 course meetings that deal with RECR issues.

2.5. Qualifying Paper and Oral Presentation

By spring of Year 2 or fall of Year 3, students must produce a Qualifying Paper—a high-quality research paper suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal and/or presentation at a professional meeting. In their Qualifying Paper, students must engage in sociological theory and report the novel results of rigorous data analysis. Students should aim for a final manuscript of approximately 8000 words (not counting tables and figures). Original research for the Qualifying Paper must be consistent with MSU's RECR guidelines. For primary data collection and secondary data analysis involving human subjects, researchers must obtain approval of the Human Research Protection Program (http://hrpp.msu.edu/).

Students will submit a highly polished draft of their Qualifying Paper to their Guidance Committee for evaluation. When the Guidance Committee approves the submission, signifying a sufficiently high-quality manuscript that requires only minor revisions, the student will secure their signatures on the Qualifying Paper Approval Form (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html). When submitting their completed approval form to the SOC APC, students will inform the APC of their intention to present their Qualifying Paper. After completing the final version of their Qualifying Paper, students must submit it as a PDF to the SOC APC.

Students must deliver a 15–17-minute oral presentation of their Qualifying Paper at a scheduled colloquium open to the entire department. Students are required to deliver their Qualifying Paper presentation to their Guidance Committee before doing so at the colloquium. This presentation will take the form of a typical professional conference talk, with the student expected to utilize PowerPoint slides (or an equivalent) and answer audience questions afterward. SOC typically schedules one such colloquium near the end of each semester.

Upon successful completion and presentation of their Qualifying Paper, students may choose to submit their Qualifying Paper to the Graduate School to obtain an MA degree (see the instructions here: https://grad.msu.edu/etd [Students intending to obtain an MA degree must complete all of the MA degree requirements (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=129#s4217) and pay all of the required fees for MA degree processing (https://grad.msu.edu/etd).] For all students, completing and presenting their Qualifying Paper is a time for reflection and evaluation. Guidance Committees should deliberate about recommending whether their students should continue in the Doctoral Program.

Students entering the SOC Doctoral Program with an MA/MS may request to have their Master's Thesis in sociology or a related field substitute for their Qualifying Paper. The GPD will select two SOC graduate faculty to evaluate whether the Master's Thesis

meets the SOC quality standards for Qualifying Papers. If both SOC graduate faculty agree, the GPD shall accept the student's Master's Thesis as a Qualifying Paper substitute. The student must then deliver an oral presentation of their Master's Thesis at a scheduled colloquium as discussed above.

2.6. Comprehensive Examination

The Comprehensive Examination typically serves as a pivoting point in students' graduate study. It is where doctoral students immerse themselves in a few substantive and/or methodological/analytical areas in which they wish to demonstrate mastery and ultimately claim expertise. Doctoral students' Comprehensive Examination areas—which align with one or more of our departmental signature areas of Health, Medicine, and the Body; Environment, Migration, and Movements; and Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality—are tightly coupled with their subsequent dissertation research. Further, within the discipline more broadly, passing a Comprehensive Examination in certain areas typically signifies a capacity and desire to teach graduate courses in those same areas.

The Comprehensive Examination provides doctoral students the opportunity to:

- demonstrate their sociological knowledge, including their ability to organize, synthesize, and evaluate/critique sociological scholarship;
- independently produce coherent, well-reasoned (if not also novel) sociological arguments; and
- express their refined writing skills, including displaying clarity and precision, achieving analytical depth, and providing high-quality supporting evidence.

While we expect students to achieve deep knowledge of the foundational works in sociology (and in their respective selected areas), we nevertheless envision that the Comprehensive Examination focus primarily on recent scholarship, the current state of the literature, and leading-edge work in their selected areas.

2.6.1. Preparation for the Comprehensive Examination

To prepare for their Comprehensive Examination, students should convene a meeting of their Guidance Committee to discuss:

- their general readiness to proceed with the Comprehensive Examination;
- their proposed three substantive and/or methodological/analytical areas;
- the proposed model for their Comprehensive Examination (see Section 2.6.2. below); and
- the creation of their substantive and/or methodological/analytical area statements and reading lists (see Section 2.6.3. below).

This discussion is especially critical for helping the outside members of the Guidance Committee learn about the procedures and norms within the department.

The student and their Guidance Committee will iterate and negotiate to identify three substantive and/or methodological/analytical areas that are neither too broad (e.g., sociology of inequality) nor too narrow (e.g., sociology of the 2008 global financial

crisis). The list of ASA Sections (https://www.asanet.org/communities-and-sections/sections/current-sections/) are good examples of broad areas which students may narrow and tailor to their interests. Ideally, students' three areas should prepare them for and inform their subsequent dissertation research.

2.6.2. Two Models

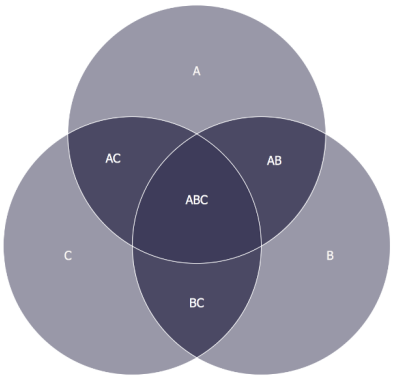
The department provides two models for structuring the Comprehensive Examination (i.e., for organizing the three substantive and/or methodological/analytical areas). The "Venn" Model imposes more substantive breadth than depth, while the "Pyramid" Model compels more substantive depth than breadth.

The Venn Model, illustrated in Figure 3 below, has been the most popular choice over the last 15 years. With this model, students identify three analytically discrete but related areas, i.e., A, B, and C. At least one of these should be a departmental signature area. Possible examples of these might be:

- health, medicine, and the body;
- environment, migration, and movements; and
- race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Typically, students devote particular attention to the intersections of these areas: i.e., AB, BC, and AC. We expect that the focus of a student's subsequent dissertation will be at the union of all three areas, i.e., ABC.

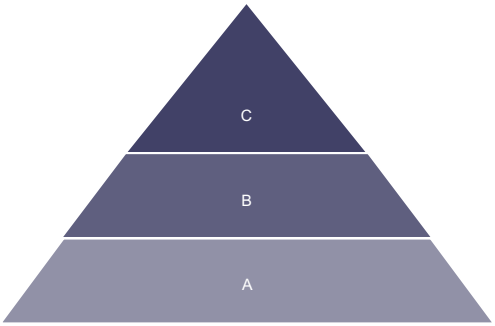
Figure 3: Venn Model of Comprehensive Examination



The Pyramid Model, illustrated in Figure 4 on the next page, has as its foundation (A) the core works in a departmental signature area: Health, Medicine, and the Body; Environment, Migration, and Movements; and Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality. Students specify a relatively discrete sub-area (B) within this larger signature area. Students articulate a specific and well-developed "locus of concern" (C), on which their subsequent dissertation will focus. Illustrative examples of these might be:

- health, medicine, and the body → mental health → race/gender disparities in mental health;
- environment, migration, and movements → environmental inequality → community-based governance solutions to environmental inequality; and
- race, class, gender, and sexuality → refugees → entrepreneurialism of ethnic minority refugees.

Figure 4: Pyramid Model of Comprehensive Examination



2.6.3. Area Statements and Reading Lists

Once a student and their Guidance Committee agree upon the substantive and/or methodological/analytical areas and Comprehensive Examination Model, the student will work with their Guidance Committee Chair to produce a brief statement and 50-work reading list for each area. Further, we strongly encourage students to prepare a brief overarching introduction to their three statements that describe the selection of their areas and the relationships among them.

Each of the brief (1-3 page) statements should provide a narrative that describes (1) central issues/debates in the area, (2) the student's focus within the area, (3) rationale for the types of literature included on the reading list; and (4) questions to be addressed in preparing for the Comprehensive Examination. For each area (i.e., A, B, and C in Section 2.6.2. above), the student will produce a reading list that includes the full ASA-style citation for approximately 50 published works (typically journal articles and books)—recognizing that some areas may require a greater or a smaller number of works than others. Especially for the Venn Model, we encourage students to include key synthetic works that integrate insights across areas.

Once the student's Guidance Committee Chair consents, the student will share their statements and reading lists with their entire Guidance Committee, who may request revisions to the statements and/or reading lists. Once the entire Guidance Committee is satisfied with the revised statements and reading lists, the student should convene another meeting with all Guidance Committee members. At this meeting, the Guidance

Committee members will approve the statements and reading lists, determine a date for the Comprehensive Examination, commit to submit 1-3 questions to the Guidance Committee Chair by a specified deadline, and discuss any concerns or questions the student may have. The student and Guidance Committee members also will complete the department's "Permission to Take Comprehensive Exam" form (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html) and submit it to the SOC APC. This completed form will be retained in the student's file. During the semester when they take their Comprehensive Examination, students must be enrolled full-time (in at least 6 credit hours) (https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s346)

The student's approved statements and reading lists are considered final after this meeting and are valid for six months. The Guidance Committee will use these files as guides in creating and finalizing their questions on the Comprehensive Examination. Although the examination will not require knowledge of literature beyond the reading lists, a question may ask a student to analyze one new journal article, a copy of which will be appended to the exam. If the student does not take their Comprehensive Examination within six months of their completed "Permission to Take Comprehensive Exam" form, the Guidance Committee members will review the reading lists and may modify them accordingly. Comprehensive Examination dates may only be changed under exceptional circumstances. Such a change or extension may be approved at the sole discretion of the student's Guidance Committee Chair.

2.6.4. Comprehensive Examination Procedures

The Guidance Committee members will submit potential Comprehensive Examination questions to the Guidance Committee Chair at least two weeks before the scheduled beginning date. The Guidance Committee Chair will pool the submitted questions, combine similar ones, drop others for length, and then circulate a full draft of the Comprehensive Examination to all Guidance Committee members for review. Upon consensus, the Guidance Committee Chair will submit the finalized Comprehensive Examination file (containing all questions and directions) to the SOC APC at least one week prior to the scheduled beginning date. The directions will require that students answer three questions, but they should have some choice among questions.

On the morning of their scheduled beginning date, the student should contact the SOC APC to receive the Comprehensive Examination file. Students will have a total of fifteen consecutive days to complete their three answers. Students may not consult with other individuals in writing their answers, although they may ask their Guidance Committee Chair to clarify the meaning of a question. Students should aim for each of their three answers to be approximately 18-23 double-spaced pages long (with 1-inch margins and Times New Roman 12 font), not including their references. Students should keep in mind that each of their essays will be evaluated according to three criteria: content, style, and originality. Students must return their completed Comprehensive Examination answers (as three separate PDF files) to the SOC APC by the designated date and time of completion.

The SOC APC will directly distribute the student's completed Comprehensive Examination answers to the student's entire Guidance Committee. Each member of the student's Guidance Committee must evaluate each of the three answers according to their content, style, and originality. For content, Guidance Committee members will assess the clarity and precision, analytical depth, and quality of evidence/reasoning in each answer. Each answer should demonstrate the capacity to conduct independent scholarship. For style, Guidance Committee members will assess the organizational structure and overall writing quality in each answer. For originality, Guidance Committee members will assess the extent of novel insights and/or new directions suggested in each answer.

Each Guidance Committee Member will independently convey their assessment of each of the student's three answers to the Guidance Committee Chair. They must choose among three possible assessments for each answer:

- **pass**: the answer is satisfactory, and no additional writing is required;
- **pass with distinction**: the answer is original, interesting, and engaging; or
- **fail**: the answer contains at least one major deficiency and is not satisfactory.

Upon receipt of all members' assessments, the Guidance Committee Chair will share with the entire Guidance Committee the number of "pass," "pass with distinction," and "fail" assessments for each answer. If a majority of Guidance Committee members (i.e., three of four members) give an answer a "pass" (or "pass with distinction") assessment, then that answer is a "pass." If two or more of the four members give an answer a "fail" assessment, then that answer is a "fail." Any Guidance Committee member may request a meeting of the entire Guidance Committee to discuss the student's answers, clarify potential disagreements in assessment, and perhaps reconcile these different assessments.

Within fifteen business days after the student submits their completed Comprehensive Examination answers to the SOC APC (not counting university holidays or mid-semester breaks), the student's Guidance Committee Chair will notify the student, the SOC GPD, and the SOC APC with the Guidance Committee's final decision about the Comprehensive Examination answers. Further, the Guidance Committee Chair is strongly encouraged to provide a summary of the Guidance Committee's assessment of and feedback on each of the student's answers. Doctoral students may complete their Comprehensive Examination during the summer, with the consent of their entire Guidance Committee. In that instance, we typically expect the Guidance Committee Chair to notify the student, the SOC GPD, and the SOC APC with the Guidance Committee's final decision within twenty business days after the student submits their completed Comprehensive Examination answers to the SOC APC.

Upon the Guidance Committee's full evaluation, the Guidance Committee Chair will complete the university form titled "Record of Comprehensive Examinations for Doctoral Degree Candidates" (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html) and submit the completed form (with Guidance Committee members' initials or signatures) to the SOC APC.

2.6.5. Evaluation Outcomes

If a student receives a “pass” (or “pass with distinction”) assessment for each of their three Comprehensive Examination answers, then they **have passed** their entire Comprehensive Examination. They have fulfilled this requirement in the Doctoral Program.

If a student receives a “fail” assessment for one, two, or three of their Comprehensive Examination answers, then they **have not passed** their entire Comprehensive Examination. For each answer receiving a “fail” assessment, the Guidance Committee Chair will report the following to the student, the SOC GPD, and the SOC APC:

- the question and area(s) it addresses;
- detailed feedback on the extent/nature of the deficiencies in the student’s answer;
- the conditions for taking the Comprehensive Examination a second time.

Students only need to retake the question area(s) of the Comprehensive Examination they failed. If a student who must retake part or all their Comprehensive Examination does not do so within six months of their completed “Permission to Take Comprehensive Exam” form, the Guidance Committee members will review the reading lists and may modify them accordingly. Students also should consider SSC deadlines (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=129) and Graduate School deadlines (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s398) for completion of the Comprehensive Examination.

The Guidance Committee must craft a new Comprehensive Examination question for the student to answer; students are not allowed to merely revise their previous answer. Students who retake part of the Comprehensive Examination will have a specified amount of time to craft their answer(s) according to how many question areas are being retaken. A student will have five days to answer one new question, ten days to answer two new questions, and fifteen days to answer three new questions. When a student retakes part or all of their Comprehensive Examination, the Guidance Committee may only provide one of two assessments for each question: pass or fail.

If a student receives a “pass” assessment for each Comprehensive Examination answer on their retake, then they **have passed** their entire Comprehensive Examination. They have fulfilled this requirement in the Doctoral Program.

If a student fails part or all of their Comprehensive Examination twice, they will be **dismissed** from the SOC Doctoral Program. They no longer will be a candidate for the SOC PhD at MSU.

2.7. Dissertation Proposal and Oral Defense

While most doctoral students are studying for their Comprehensive Examination, they also are conducting pre-dissertation research and/or working on drafts of their

dissertation proposal with their Guidance Committee Chair. Getting an early start on their dissertation proposal is crucial for those students who plan on applying for external pre-dissertation fellowships, dissertation research fellowships, and/or dissertation writing/completion fellowships. Here are some of the most common external, competitive fellowships and scholarships for supporting dissertation projects:

- American Association of University Women (AAUW) American Dissertation Fellowship (https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/fellowships-grants/current-opportunities/american/dissertation-fellowships/)
- American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Mellon Dissertation Completion Fellowship (https://www.acls.org/programs/dcf/);
- Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship (https://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/FordFellowships/PGA_171939);
- Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA) Program (https://www.isp.msu.edu/academics-learning/learning-abroad/fulbright-programs/fulbright-student-programs/ddra);
- Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation Emerging Scholars Award (https://www.hfg.org/emerging-scholars/);
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) R36 Dissertation Award (https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/other-training-related/R36);
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement (DDRI) Award (https://www.asanet.org/academic-professional-resources/asa-grants-and-fellowships/asa-doctoral-dissertation-research-improvement-grants-asa-ddrig) and in the Sociology Program (https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505118&org=NSF);
- Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Social Sciences in Africa: Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Fellowship (https://www.ssrc.org/programs/next-generation-social-sciences-in-africa/doctoral-dissertation-proposal-fellowship/);
- Social Science Research Council (SSRC) International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF) (https://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/view/idrf-fellowship/); and
- Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) Dissertation Scholarships (https://sws.memberclicks.net/)

While writing their dissertation proposal, students work closely with their Guidance Committee Chair, who provides them with guidelines for its structure, required and recommended content, and target length. At a minimum, however, all SOC dissertation proposals must include the following five sections: (1) introduction, (2) literature review, (3) research questions, (4) methodological design and research plan, and (5) expected contributions of this project to the discipline.

The introduction should clearly convey the rationale or justification for the proposed research, while situating the proposed research within relevant literatures and/or noting any gaps in current scholarship. The literature review should provide necessary background, explain in greater depth the gaps in existing research, and draw insights from relevant theory that inform the proposed research. The research questions section may begin, as applicable, with a description of the theoretical framework or analytical model that guides the proposed research. This section should contain the theoretically

relevant research questions to be answered (and, as applicable, theoretical hypotheses to be tested). The methodological design and research plan component likely will be the most substantial part of the dissertation proposal. This section should describe the general method(s) the student proposes to use, their approach to causal inference, and their unit(s) of analysis. It also should contain all relevant information about their sampling design(s) and measurement decisions, as well as all details of their data collection, management, and analyses procedures. Also in this section, students should acknowledge that (a) original research for their Dissertation must be consistent with MSU's RECR guidelines and (b) they will obtain HRPP approval (http://hrpp.msu.edu/) for primary data collection and secondary data analysis involving human subjects. In the final section, students should discuss the theoretical, methodological, and/or substantive contributions their proposed research will make in the discipline (and possibly in the wider scientific community and beyond).

When their Guidance Committee Chair is satisfied with the quality of their Dissertation Proposal, students will distribute this document to their entire Guidance Committee. Guidance Committee members will have at least two to three weeks to review the Dissertation Proposal prior to the student's oral defense. During the oral defense, the student will deliver a moderately long (30-40 minute) public presentation to all Guidance Committee members and the MSU SOC community. After fielding questions from the wider audience, the student typically responds to more detailed, in-depth questions from their Guidance Committee members. After successful completion of the Dissertation Proposal oral defense, the Guidance Committee members will complete the department's Dissertation Proposal Approval Form (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html), and the doctoral student will submit this to the SOC APC.

Having successfully defended their Dissertation Proposal, doctoral students are "advanced to candidacy." Within academia, such advancement merely means that the student essentially only has to complete and defend their Dissertation to earn their PhD. Colloquially, we often refer to this as "all but dissertation" (ABD). Neither candidacy nor ABD are formal titles; they are simply used to informally mark progress within the doctoral program.

SOC expects that students will defend their Dissertation Proposal by the end of their fifth year in the Doctoral Program. Students are required to complete their Dissertation Proposal and successfully complete their oral defense of this proposal within one calendar year of completing their Comprehensive Examination.

2.8. Dissertation and Oral Defense

Doctoral students typically work closely with their Guidance Committee Chair during at least the initial stages of their dissertation research and writing—if not throughout the entire process. As agreed, upon by all parties, Guidance Committee members may help the student with certain methods and/or analyses and/or on certain topics. Since situations change, exigencies intervene, and decisions are influenced by contingencies,

students should realize that they may need to slightly or significantly modify their plans during their dissertation research. This is why it is important to stay in regular contact with the Guidance Committee—and with their Guidance Committee Chair especially. Even with such variability, it is important for students to adhere to a specified timeline for completion of specific tasks related to the full dissertation project to ensure timely progression to complete their degree.

Students must organize and produce their dissertation following the specific instructions in the Graduate School Formatting Guide (https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/etd/ETD%20Formatting%20Guide%20August%202025.pdf). Students should familiarize themselves with these guidelines (https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/t/1_nqj5ogts), common pitfalls to avoid (https://grad.msu.edu/etd/), and deadlines (https://grad.msu.edu/etd/etd-deadline-dates) early in the process of dissertation writing.

Historically, most SOC doctoral students have written a book-length (i.e., monograph) dissertation—with separate chapters for their introduction, literature review/theory, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. This option is especially suitable for dissertation research that involves intensive, long-term work on a single substantive topic, research question, and/or study site.

With the approval of their entire Guidance Committee, students may choose to write their dissertation in the form of three distinct journal article manuscripts. With this "three-paper" option, each paper must fulfill the standards acceptable for publishing an article in a reputable sociology journal. That is, each paper must conform to the expected article format and include the following elements: introduction, literature review, methods, results and discussion, conclusion, references, and tables and figures (as appropriate). This three-paper option has been popular in the past 15 years and is best for dissertation research that involves several related, but slightly different research questions and projects. Further, students and graduate faculty often see the three-paper option as efficient for helping students submit their dissertation to peer-reviewed journals later. With the three-paper option, students must write brief, stand-alone introduction and conclusion essays that bookend the three papers. The introductory essay serves as an introduction to the complete dissertation, discussing the general themes in, and describing the structure of the subsequent papers. The concluding essay integrates key findings/insights from the three papers, discusses the complete dissertation's contributions, and describes potential avenues for further research.

Doctoral students are required to complete at least 24 credits of SOC 999: Doctoral Dissertation Research to earn their PhD. Students should register for these SOC 999 credits as soon as they begin their pre-dissertation research. Department approval is required for enrollment. The maximum number of dissertation credits allowed is 36. Students must be enrolled in at least one credit of SOC 999 during the semester in which they defend their dissertation.

As they are finishing up their dissertation revising, students should work with their Guidance Committee Chair to establish a feasible timeline for completion; a plan for distributing their finely polished and (nearly) finalized dissertation to their entire Guidance Committee; and a time, date, and location of their dissertation oral defense. Students must submit their dissertation to their entire Guidance Committee at least two to three weeks prior to their scheduled dissertation oral defense. In some cases, a longer review period is appropriate and preferred. When students schedule their Dissertation oral defense with the SOC APC, they also must submit a public or lay audience Abstract for the department to use in advertising the event. At this time, the student should complete the top three lines of the university form titled “Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidate” (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html).

To ensure fairness in the oral defense and maintenance of academic standards, the SSC Dean may appoint a non-voting member to the Guidance Committee from outside of the department. This outside member of the Guidance Committee (known as the “Dean’s Representative”) will read and evaluate the dissertation, participate in the entirety of the oral defense, and submit a report to the SSC Dean afterwards.

An oral defense of a Dissertation has two parts. In the first part, the doctoral student delivers a moderately long (40-45 minute) public presentation that is open to the entire Guidance Committee, other faculty members, graduate students, and members of the public. The student then answers questions from audience members, not on the Guidance Committee. The Guidance Committee Chair then ends the first part of the oral defense and asks all to leave except for the Guidance Committee (including the “Dean’s Representative,” as applicable). After a break, the Guidance Committee Chair starts the second part, where Guidance Committee members take turns asking the student questions about the written dissertation or oral defense. After the student has answered all of the Guidance Committee’s questions, the Guidance Committee Chair asks the student to leave the room while the entire Guidance Committee deliberates and decides whether the student has successfully defended their Dissertation. The Guidance Committee Chair then completes the remainder of the “Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidate,” which all Guidance Committee members sign. The Guidance Committee Chair invites the student back into the room, informs them of the outcome of the Guidance Committee vote, and then discusses the extent to which any further revisions are required by the Guidance Committee prior to the student submitting their Dissertation to the Graduate School. After successful completion of the Dissertation Proposal oral defense, the doctoral student submits the completed and signed “Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidate” to the SOC APC.

SOC expects that students will defend their Dissertation by the end of their sixth year in the Doctoral Program. Per Graduate School policy, students are required to defend their Dissertation within eight years of the first course that is counted toward their doctoral program of study.

2.9. GradPlan

All MSU doctoral students use a centralized system called GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/) to document and update their coursework, RECR training, Guidance Committee composition, research activities, and other benchmarks in their program of study. Guides to help doctoral students navigate the GradPlan system are available at https://grad.msu.edu/gradplan. GradPlan has several key sections:

- **Committees**: (initially completed by beginning of second year and updated later as necessary) doctoral students identify and, as needed, change their Guidance Committee Chair and other Guidance Committee members;
- **Course Plan**: (initially completed by beginning of second year and updated later as necessary) doctoral students identify and, as necessary, change the courses they intend to complete to fulfill doctoral program requirements (and those of any other programs or certificates, as applicable);
- **Research Overview**: (updated several times annually) doctoral students annually acknowledge their student-based rights and responsibilities; affirm familiarity with their Doctoral Program Handbook; and disclose any research activities involving human subjects, animal subjects, and hazardous materials; and
- **Annual Review**: (completed annually) doctoral students will complete and store their official departmental annual review materials.

Students must regularly update the information above in their GradPlan to remain in good standing in the SOC Doctoral Program.

2.10. Additional Components

2.10.1. Residency Requirements

University policy requires that new doctoral students maintain residence on campus for their first two consecutive semesters (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s393). This helps students (a) work closely with and/or under the direction of the graduate faculty and (b) engage in independent and cooperative research using MSU facilities. SOC interprets this broadly to allow students to live within the Lansing metropolitan area (i.e., within 12 miles from the MSU campus). Further, to be considered for a GTA position (and likely for a GRA position) in the department, you must maintain residency within proximity to campus to be able to perform work duties on campus up to five days a week.

2.10.2. Graduate Certificates and Dual Major Doctoral Degree Programs

MSU has a number of Graduate Certificates that SOC Doctoral Students may earn and add to their degree (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Programs.aspx?PType=GCRT).

Further, some SOC Doctoral Students may aim to earn a Dual Major Doctoral Degree (https://grad.msu.edu/interdisciplinary-graduate-study). SSC requires that a formal

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is developed for the Dual Majors Doctoral Degree. Further, the MOU must be reviewed and approved by the GPDs of both programs, the Associate Deans for Graduate Studies in the respective College or Colleges, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

A request for the Dual Major Doctoral Degree must be submitted via GradPlan within one semester following its development and within the first two years of the student's enrollment at MSU. The following conditions must be met (https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s407):

1. the intent to receive the degree in two areas must be outlined in a letter of request from the student and supported with a letter from their Guidance Committee;
2. the GPDs of each program will meet with the student to negotiate coursework and standards to be met for both departments;
3. the integrated coursework must be satisfactory to both departments;
4. the Comprehensive Examination must be passed to the satisfaction of both departments;
5. a Guidance Committee including members from both departments must be satisfied that the dissertation represents a contribution meeting the usual standards in both areas;
6. there must be a single dissertation that represents an integration of the disciplinary areas; and
7. RECR requirements will be as defined and approved by the Guidance Committee in accordance with University RECR requirements.

2.10.3. English Language Proficiency Requirements (for international students)

All international students are required to demonstrate competence in English sufficient for graduate study (https://grad.msu.edu/english-language-competency). Scores in examinations at the MSU English Language Center or Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores determine sufficient competence (https://elc.msu.edu/future-students/msu-english-proficiency-requirements/). Admission into the Doctoral Program is provisional until this requirement is satisfied; provisional admits are not eligible for departmental Graduate Assistantship funding. Admission into the Doctoral Program is provisional until this requirement is satisfied; provisional admits are not eligible for departmental Graduate Assistantship funding.

Delays in satisfying this requirement and failure to enroll in recommended English language courses can affect international students' standing in the Doctoral Program. If international students are admitted on a provisional basis because of language proficiency requirements, they can be issued an I-20 for language studies only. This I-20 is limited to a maximum of 2 years. The student would need to be tested at the English Language Center (ELC) upon arrival and begin studying at the English level determined by that test. Once the international student meets the SOC English language proficiency requirements, that student may be issued a degree-seeking I-20. If the international student has not met the English language proficiency requirement for

departmental admission at the end of two years, that student cannot continue to enroll in courses.

Candidates for GTA appointments required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to MSU must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. (This also includes international students who received a waiver of the TOEFL or of other accepted tests of English proficiency for admission.) International students may meet this requirement in one of three ways:

- presenting a TOEFL iBT speaking section score of 27 or higher;
- receiving a score of 50 or higher on the MSU Speaking Test (https://elc.msu.edu/tests/msu-speaking-test/); or
- taking AAE 451 or AAE 452 (https://elc.msu.edu/programs/ita/ita-course-offerings/) (international GTA language support courses) and receiving a score of 50 or higher on the International GTA Oral Interaction Test (https://elc.msu.edu/tests/international-teaching-assistant-oral-interaction-itaoi/).

The Graduate School—in consultation with the ELC upon the request of the department and with the endorsement of the SSC Associate Dean of Graduate Studies—may consider individual exceptions from these requirements (on a case-by-case basis only in rare circumstances).

3. Degree Requirements

3.1. The First Year

1. Complete 1st-year courses (typically SOC 815, 816, 881, 882, 885, and electives) selected in consultation with the GPD and Guidance Committee Chair
2. Select Guidance Committee Chair (aka, Major Professor or Dissertation Advisor)
3. Participate in the Departmental Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop, as described in Section 2.2. above
4. Participate in the SOC Professional Development Workshop Series, as described in Section 2.3. above
5. Complete 1st-year RECR requirements, as described in Section 2.4.1. above (see also https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html; https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity)
6. Input planned coursework complete required tasks in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/)
7. Complete Goal Setting Report and Annual Progress Report with Guidance Committee Chair, as described in Section 7.6. below

3.2. The Second Year

1. Complete 2nd-year courses (typically signature area electives) selected in consultation with the Guidance Committee Chair
2. Complete two of the following: SOC 883, 884, 985, 986, or another 800- or 900-level advanced methods/analyses course approved by the student's Guidance Committee
3. Complete and present Qualifying Paper by spring of Year 2 or fall of Year 3
4. Participate in the SOC Professional Development Workshop Series, as described in Section 2.3. above
5. Complete 2nd-year RECR requirements, as described in Section 2.4.2. above (see also https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html; https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity)
6. Identify full Guidance Committee and completed required tasks in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/)
7. Complete Goal Setting Report and Annual Progress Report with Guidance Committee Chair, as described in Section 7.6. below

3.3. The Third Year

1. As necessary, complete remaining courses selected in consultation with the Guidance Committee
2. Participate in the SOC Professional Development Workshop Series, as described in Section 2.3. above
3. Complete 3rd-year+ RECR requirements, as described in Section 2.4.3. above (see also https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html; https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity)
4. Update relevant information and complete required tasks in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/)
5. Complete Goal Setting Report and Annual Progress Report with Guidance Committee Chair, as described in Section 7.6. below

3.4. The Fourth Year

1. Complete Comprehensive Examination
2. Participate in SOC Professional Development Workshop Series, as described in Section 2.3. above (as necessary)
3. Complete 3rd-year+ RECR requirements, as described in Section 2.4.3. above (see also https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html; https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity)
4. Update relevant information and complete required tasks in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/)
5. Enroll in SOC 999 credits (at least one credit per semester)
6. Perform (Pre-)Dissertation research and writing
7. Complete Goal Setting Report and Annual Progress Report with Guidance Committee Chair, as described in Section 7.6. below

3.5. The Fifth Year

1. Complete oral defense of Dissertation Proposal
2. Perform Dissertation research and writing
3. Participate in the SOC Professional Development Workshop Series, as described in Section 2.3. above (as necessary)
4. Complete 3rd-year+ RECR requirements, as described in Section 2.4.3. above (see also https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html; https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity)
5. Update relevant information and complete required tasks in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/)
6. Enroll in SOC 999 credits (at least one credit per semester)
7. Complete Goal Setting Report and Annual Progress Report with Guidance Committee Chair, as described in Section 7.6. below

3.6. The Final Year

1. Complete oral defense of Dissertation
2. Submit Guidance Committee-approved Dissertation to the Graduate School (https://grad.msu.edu/etd)
3. Participate in SOC Professional Development Workshop Series, as described in Section 2.3. above (as necessary)
4. Complete 3rd-year+ RECR requirements, as described in Section 2.4.3. above (see also https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html; https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity)
5. Update relevant information and complete required tasks in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/)
6. Enroll in SOC 999 credits (at least one credit during the semester when Dissertation is defended)
7. Complete Goal Setting Report and Annual Progress Report with Guidance Committee Chair, as described in Section 7.6. below

8. Complete MSU Exit Survey (https://www.egr.msu.edu/doctoral/survey.do;jsessionid=lO_iw0yaGKZ7gXwo215WkgP8uDeU0djfbCXtYlTH.rocket)

Table 2: Requirements for Doctoral Degree in Sociology

Program Requirements	**Credit Hours**	**Expected Timing***
All of the following courses: SOC 815, SOC 816, SOC 881, SOC 882, and SOC 885	15	Year 1
Two of the following courses: SOC 883, SOC 884, SOC 985, or SOC 986 (or another 800- or 900-level advanced methods/analyses course approved by the student's Guidance Committee)	6	Years 2-3
At least five courses in or related to a Signature Area, approved by the Guidance Committee	15	Years 1-3
Total Coursework	*36*	
24 SOC 999: Doctoral Dissertation Research Credits**	24	
Total	**60**	
Successful completion of Departmental Graduate Teaching Assistant workshop		Year 1
Successful formation of Guidance Committee		Year 2
Successful completion and presentation of Qualifying Paper		spring of Year 2 or fall of Year 3
Successful completion of Comprehensive Examination		Year 4
Successful oral defense of Dissertation Proposal		Year 5
Successful oral defense of Dissertation		Year 6
Successful completion of Departmental Professional Development Workshop Series		Years 1-3; as needed Years 4-6
Successful completion of Responsible Conduct of Research (RECR) certification***		update annually
Successful completion of required tasks in GradPlan		update annually

* The expected years are for students entering the Doctoral Program with a BA/BS. Failing to complete program requirements in a timely fashion places students at risk of losing their "good academic standing" status (see Section 7.6.3. below). Students "not in good academic standing" may have holds on their university account, making them unable to enroll in courses or receive assistantships or fellowships. Information about requests for extensions to the University's Comprehensive Exam and PhD time limits is available here: https://grad.msu.edu/tle-info.
** The maximum number of dissertation credits allowed is 36.
*** RECR training involves Department, College, and University requirements.

4. Selection of Guidance Committee Chair

4.1. First Year Advisor

Prior to their first semester in the SOC Doctoral Program, the GPD will assign a First Year Advisor to each incoming student. A student's First Year Advisor—often in consultation with the GPD—will serve as their mentor, sounding board, and support person as the student transitions to the University, the Department, and the Doctoral Program. A student's First Year Advisor will assist them in selecting courses and planning their program of study. They also may help the student identify research funding sources, language or methodological training programs, and scholarly communities at MSU and beyond that are relevant to the student's scholarly interests.

By the end of the second semester of their first year, students should select the Chair of their Guidance Committee (MSU SOC faculty and doctoral students often refer to a Guidance Committee Chair colloquially as a "major professor," "major advisor," or "chair"). Only tenure-system faculty with a formal appointment in SOC may serve as a doctoral student's Guidance Committee Chair.

Students can choose to ask their First Year Advisor if the latter will become the former Guidance Committee Chair, or they may decide that it would be better for another faculty member to serve in that capacity. This decision frequently involves consultation between the student and the First Year Advisor, and the student may also consult with the GPD or any other faculty in the department. The decision to request that a faculty member serve as Guidance Committee Chair is ultimately up to the student, and the faculty member has the choice of accepting or rejecting the request. About half of our doctoral students continue with their First Year Advisor as their Guidance Committee Chair, and the other half select another faculty member as their Guidance Committee Chair (often while selecting to have their First Year Advisor serve as a regular member on their Guidance Committee).

4.2. Guidance Committee Chair

The Guidance Committee Chair will help the student identify the remaining members of their Guidance Committee (which is described in Section 5). Prior to forming their full Guidance Committee, the student—in consultation with their First Year Advisor or Guidance Committee Chair—will create a tentative list of all courses they expect to take each semester throughout their program of study. The full list of MSU courses can be found here: https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/.

The Graduate School has developed a set of guidelines, resources, and workshops for helping a student and their Guidance Committee Chair build and maintain a strong, supportive, and effective mentoring relationship. Information about each of these can be found here: https://grad.msu.edu/optimizing-mentoring.

- Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising: https://grad.msu.edu/msu-guidelines-graduate-student-mentoring-advising

- Mentor-Mentee resources (expectation setting tool; written mentor-mentee agreements; student progress worksheets; mentor evaluation resources): https://grad.msu.edu/mentoring-toolkit
- Online and In-Person Mentor-Mentee Workshops: https://grad.msu.edu/mentor-mentee-workshops

A student's Guidance Committee Chair serves as their primary mentor and advisor during their time in the doctoral program. Generally, the Guidance Committee Chair is responsible for:

- approving the student's program of study (i.e., doctoral coursework and any other transcriptable or non-transcriptable certificates, specializations, or degrees);
- helping the student craft their professional identity and scholarly agenda;
- guiding the student in professional development and socialization;
- helping the student identify and define feasible research projects for their Qualifying Paper and Dissertation; and
- helping the student navigate the professional job market.

If a student's Guidance Committee Chair leaves MSU before the student earns their PhD, the student, outgoing Guidance Committee Chair, and SOC GPD will work together to identify a new Guidance Committee Chair. In most instances, this new Guidance Committee Chair will be an existing member of the student's Guidance Committee. Further, in most cases when the Guidance Committee Chair leaves MSU after the student has completed their Comprehensive Examination, the student will have the opportunity to retain the outgoing Guidance Committee Chair as a regular member of their Guidance Committee if they wish.

5. Formation of Guidance Committee

By the beginning of their third semester in the Doctoral Program, students must select the remaining members of their Guidance Committee, with consultation from their Guidance Committee Chair. After considering advice from their Chair, students should schedule a meeting with potential Guidance Committee members to discuss with those potential members why they would like the person to be on their Guidance Committee and shared expectations of the relationship. It is up to students as to whom they request membership on their committees, and up to the potential member if they will accept the request.

The Guidance Committee must include at least four tenure-system faculty members at MSU. Emeriti faculty may only serve on a Guidance Committee during the first academic year after their retirement. Faculty not in the tenure-system or emeriti faculty who have been retired for more than two semesters may only serve on a Guidance Committee in addition to the required four tenure-system members.

Fixed-term faculty, academic specialists, support staff, and non-MSU employees may also serve on Guidance Committees. The policy for including such individuals can be found here: https://grad.msu.edu/non-regular-faculty-committees.

Three members of the Guidance Committee—including the Guidance Committee Chair—must be tenure-system faculty with a formal appointment in SOC. One Guidance Committee member (referred to colloquially as the “outside” or “external” member) must be an MSU tenure-system faculty member with no formal appointment in SOC. In special circumstances, MSU faculty not in the tenure system may serve as the external member, but only with the approval of the three SOC faculty on the Guidance Committee and the SOC GPD. The external member is not allowed to Chair or co-Chair the committee.

Immediately after forming their Guidance Committee, the student will meet with their full Guidance Committee to discuss and formalize their program of study (i.e., their courses to be taken, tentative comprehensive exam topics, and tentative dissertation topic). The student will then enter this program of study information into GradPlan.

The student may change the composition of their Guidance Committee, including their Guidance Committee Chair, during their graduate study at any but the following times: during the comprehensive exam, during the proposal defense, and for three months prior to the dissertation defense. Changes to committee composition are commonly decided through individual conversations between the student and relevant committee members, but if the student feels they need additional guidance or support they should contact the GPD or Department Chairperson. The student will need to enter committee changes in GradPlan, and all Guidance Committee members—current and proposed—must approve of the change in GradPlan.

6. Dissertation Defense

Students should work with their Guidance Committee Chair to establish a feasible timeline for completion; a plan for distributing their finely polished and (nearly) finalized dissertation to their entire Guidance Committee; and a time, date, and location of their dissertation oral defense. Students must submit their dissertation to their entire Guidance Committee at least two weeks prior to their scheduled oral defense. In some cases, a longer review period is appropriate and preferred. When students schedule their oral defense with the SOC APC, they also must submit a public or lay audience Abstract for the department to use in advertising the event. At this time, the student should complete the top three lines of the university form titled "Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidate" (https://sociology.msu.edu/_assets/pdfs/Record.pdf). Students must be enrolled in at least one credit of SOC 999 during the semester in which they defend their dissertation.

To ensure fairness in the oral defense and maintenance of academic standards, the SSC Dean may appoint a non-voting member to the Guidance Committee from outside of the department. This outside member of the Guidance Committee (known as the "Dean's Representative") will read and evaluate the dissertation, participate in the entirety of the oral defense, and submit a report to the SSC Dean afterwards.

The oral defense starts with the student delivering a public presentation of approximately 45 minutes. The student then answers questions from audience members other than the Guidance Committee. The Guidance Committee Chair then asks all to leave except for the Guidance Committee (including the "Dean's Representative," as applicable) and the student. The Guidance Committee members take turns asking the student questions about the written dissertation and/or oral defense. After the student has answered all the Guidance Committee's questions, the Guidance Committee Chair asks the student to leave the room while the Guidance Committee decides whether the student has successfully defended their dissertation. The dissertation and the student's performance on the final oral examination must be approved by a positive vote by at least three–fourths of the voting examiners and with not more than one dissenting vote from among the MSU regular faculty members of the guidance committee. The Guidance Committee Chair then completes the "Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidate" form, and all Guidance Committee members sign it. The Guidance Committee Chair invites the student back into the room, informs them of the outcome of the Guidance Committee vote, and then discusses the extent to which any further revisions are required by the Guidance Committee prior to the student submitting their Dissertation to the Graduate School. If revisions are necessary prior to submission of the dissertation, the Guidance Committee Chair works with the student to ensure that necessary revisions are made, after which the chair signs the Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidate indicating their approval and submits the form to the SOC APC.

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Submission of the final approved dissertation to ProQuest is completed by the student and must be completed by the filing deadlines indicated on the Graduate School's website, found here: https://grad.msu.edu/etd/etd-deadline-dates. Formatting requirements can be found here: https://grad.msu.edu/etd.

SOC expects that students will defend their Dissertation by the end of their sixth year in the Doctoral Program. Per Graduate School policy, students are required to defend their Dissertation within eight years of the first course that is counted toward their doctoral program of study.

7. Departmental Policies: Academic and Professional Performance

7.1. Time-to-Degree Requirement

The Sociology Doctoral Program is designed to take six years to complete. Forty-nine doctoral students who have entered the Sociology Doctoral Program in the last 15 years (since fall 2008) have earned their PhD. The median and mean time-to-degree are 6.39 years and 6.28 years, respectively. Table 2 in Section 3 outlines program benchmarks and expected timing for coursework, workshop participation, Qualifying Paper, Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Proposal, and Dissertation.

In addition to departmental expectations, the MSU Graduate School provides deadlines that are a maximum allotted time to complete degree requirements (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391). Briefly, doctoral students should successfully complete (a) their Comprehensive Examination within four years of entry into the Doctoral Program and (b) all doctoral degree requirements within six years of entry into the Doctoral Program. If a student does not (a) complete their Comprehensive Examination within five years of entry into the Doctoral Program (without applying for and receiving an extension) or (b) earn their PhD within eight years of entry into the Doctoral Program (without applying for and receiving an extension), then they will be dismissed from the SOC Doctoral Program.

Under extraordinary extenuating circumstances that are documented and verifiable, and with the support of their entire Guidance Committee, a student may apply for an extension to (a) complete their Comprehensive Examination or (b) complete their doctoral degree requirements. The student must initiate their extension request prior to the relevant university-mandated deadline. Every extension request must be reviewed and approved by the SOC GPD and Chairperson before being reviewed and considered for approval by SSC and the Graduate School.

7.2. Deferred Grades and Incomplete Grades

Except in multi-term courses, SOC discourages doctoral students from incurring postponed grades in their courses (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s528). An Incomplete (I) grade or Deferred (DF) grade on a student's transcript can have adverse effects on their career in the following ways:

1. An I or DF grade which is not removed within a year of being incurred may cause the student to forfeit the right to continue enrollment until the course(s) has been completed.
2. A student who incurs more than 6 credits of I or DF grades will lose their Graduate Assistantship.
3. No student may take their Comprehensive Examination until all I or DF grades in any area to be examined have been removed.

Students who receive an I or DF grade in a course and who fail to complete the remaining coursework prior to the university deadline will receive a 0.0 course grade and will need to retake that course.

7.3. Academic Standards

To earn their SOC PhD, a doctoral student must have a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.00. This is a minimum university standard (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391). In addition, SOC requires all doctoral students to earn a final grade of at least 3.0 in each of the following:

- SOC 815,
- SOC 816,
- SOC 881,
- SOC 882,
- SOC 885,
- both of the advanced methods/analyses courses: SOC 883, SOC 884, SOC 985, or SOC 986 (or another 800- or 900-level advanced methods/analyses course approved by the student's Guidance Committee), and
- at least three of the five courses in or related to a Signature Area approved by the student's Guidance Committee.

Students earning less than a 3.0 final grade in any of these courses must retake that course and earn a final grade of at least 3.0 in the retake.

7.4. Course Waivers and Substitutions

Students who enter the SOC Doctoral Program with a graduate degree from another institution may request a review and transfer of up to nine credit hours—essentially waiving up to three three-credit courses. In each case, after consulting with their temporary advisor, the student must submit the following course information to the SOC APC as soon as possible following entry into the SOC Doctoral Program: a copy of the syllabus of the course taken; a completed SOC course waiver request form; a copy of the completed assignments from that course; and evidence that they earned a grade equivalent to an MSU 3.0 in that course through their official transcript.

The APC will forward the materials and SOC course waiver form to the instructor of the SOC course that the student is requesting to waive. The instructor must have taught that same/similar course during the last three academic years. The instructor will act as the primary evaluator and approver on the student's request. Specifically, they will judge whether the appropriateness and rigor of the course content and the scholarly quality of completed assignments are sufficient to meet SOC departmental standards and justify a course waiver. The instructor will decide whether the course waiver is justified and email the completed waiver form to the SOC GPD and APC. The GPD will review and sign the completed form, and if the course waiver has been approved, forward it to the APC to submit the request to the College to be added to the student's Degree Audit record.

Students who enter the SOC Doctoral Program with an MSU Master's degree may not use any earned credits from completed Master's Program courses in the SOC Doctoral Program. However, following the process noted earlier in this subsection, they may request that completed MSU graduate coursework be used to waive a SOC Doctoral Program course requirement. In the case of an approved waiver, the student will note this in the Notes section of their GradPlan (where they also may document any course substitutions approved by their Guidance Committee).

7.5. Illness-Related Absences or Grief Absences

In the case of an illness-related absence or a grief absence, a student is responsible for:

- notifying their Guidance Committee Chair (and/or Temporary Advisor) and the instructor of each course in which they are currently enrolled in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation;
- providing appropriate verification of the illness or grief absence as specified by the Guidance Committee Chair (and/or Temporary Advisor) and course instructor(s); and
- completing all missed work as determined in consultation with the Guidance Committee Chair (and/or Temporary Advisor) and course instructor(s).

The student's Guidance Committee Chair (and/or Temporary Advisor) and each course instructor is responsible for:

- determining with the student the expected period of absence (some illnesses or bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances);
- receiving verification of the authenticity of an illness-related absence or grief absence upon the student's return, and
- making reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized.

If the student is employed as a GTA, GRA, or GTE, they also are responsible for notifying their direct supervisor. The student and their direct supervisor will communicate swiftly to determine how the student's work responsibilities will be covered during their absence.

GTAs should refer to the bereavement policy in Article 18 of the collectively bargained agreement between MSU and the Graduate Employees Union (GEU) (https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/documents/geu-2024-2028.pdf). GTAs who believe their rights under this policy have been violated should contact the MSU Ombudsperson (https://ombud.msu.edu/).

7.5.1. Leave of Absences from Program

If a student takes a leave from the program and has not been enrolled for one year (two semesters) or longer, the student must apply for readmission and readmission is not guaranteed. The student will be evaluated alongside current applicants to the program, using the same admissions criteria and expectations by which those applicants are

considered for admission.

7.6. Performance Evaluations

We evaluate doctoral students' performance in the SOC Doctoral Program in several ways across different time scales:

- course assignment grades;
- final course grades;
- GTA/GRA evaluations (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html);
- Annual Progress Report (see Section 7.6.2 below);
- Qualifying Paper and oral presentation (see Section 2.5);
- Comprehensive Examination (see Section 2.6);
- Dissertation Proposal and oral defense (see Section 2.7); and
- Dissertation and oral defense (see Section 2.8).

7.6.1. Goal Setting Report

Early in each fall semester, doctoral students will complete the department's Goal Setting Report (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html) with their Guidance Committee Chair (or Temporary Advisor). In this form, students will document:

- which courses they plan on taking during the academic year;
- when they intend to meet key program benchmarks (e.g., completion of Qualifying Paper, completion of Comprehensive Exam, defense of Dissertation Proposal, and defense of Dissertation);
- which scholarly conferences they are planning on attending during the upcoming year;
- their academic goals and research goals for the academic year; and
- any funding or other concerns affecting their progress in the program.

After both the student and their Guidance Committee Chair (or Temporary Advisor) sign the Goal Setting Report, the student will submit the report to the SOC APC.

7.6.2. Annual Progress Report

In accordance with GSRR Article 2.4.8. (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html), students in the SOC Doctoral Program will have their academic progress, overall performance, and professional potential evaluated in writing each year. Around the middle of each spring semester, students will complete the department's Academic Progress Report (APR) (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html). In this form, students will document:

- their current GPA, coursework completed, and dates of benchmarks met;
- contacts with their Guidance Committee Chair and entire Guidance Committee;
- when they intend to meet key program benchmarks (e.g., completion of Qualifying Paper, completion of Comprehensive Exam, defense of Dissertation Proposal, and defense of Dissertation);

- remaining coursework to be completed;
- funding sources for the current year;
- experiences gained and skills improved during their funded work; and
- progress in achieving their academic goals and their career goals.

Further, students will include the following information in a supplement to their APR:

- goals for the next academic year;
- accomplishments during the current year:
  - papers published or submitted;
  - presentations at professional conferences;
  - participation on funded grants;
  - RECR requirements completed;
  - other relevant scholarly activities or accomplishments; and
- their up-to-date CV.

Students then will review and discuss this report with their entire Guidance Committee (typically, first with their Guidance Committee Chair and then with a meeting of their entire Guidance Committee). After this discussion, both the student and their entire Guidance Committee will sign the APR before submitting it to the SOC APC. Students who wish to appeal, clarify, and/or otherwise respond to their Guidance Committee's evaluation may do so in writing to the SOC GPD. They may submit their written response to the SOC APC when (or shortly after) they submit their signed APR. The student's signed APR, and their written response (if applicable), will be placed by the SOC APC into their GradPlan.

The SOC GPD, in consultation with the SOC GEC, will review and evaluate all doctoral students' academic standing and progress toward their degree near the end of each spring semester. The SOC GPD will evaluate all students' performance according to the criteria in Section 7.6.3 below. The GPD will assess each student as either (a) "in good academic standing" or "not in good academic standing" and (b) "making satisfactory progress toward their degree" or "not making satisfactory progress toward their degree." The GPD (typically through the APC) will provide their written evaluation of each doctoral student to the student and their Guidance Committee Chair by the end of the academic year (i.e., May 15).

For students in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward their degree, no further action is necessary. For students not in good academic standing or not making satisfactory progress toward their degree, the GPD will notify the student and their Guidance Committee Chair of this in writing. The GPD also may hold a meeting with the student and their Guidance Committee Chair to discuss the student's academic standing and progress toward their degree in greater depth. Further, in consultation with the student's Guidance Committee Chair, the GPD may offer to help create a Performance Improvement Plan for the student (see Section 7.6.5 below).

7.6.3. Good Academic Standing and Making Satisfactory Progress

In this sub-section, and in accordance with GSRR Article 2.4.9. (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/article-two-academic-rights-and-responsibilities-for-graduate-students.html), SOC defines "good academic standing" and "making satisfactory progress toward their degree."

The criteria for academic standing are drawn from SOC academic standards (Sections 2, 7.2, and 7.3 above), which comply with—and extend—MSU policy (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391) and SSC policy (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=129#s4005). SOC considers that doctoral students are in good academic standing when they meet each of the four criteria:

1. maintain at least a 3.00 GPA in the doctoral program;
2. have earned at least a 3.0 final grade in any of the following courses taken:
    a. SOC 815, 816, 881, 882, and 885;
    b. both of the advanced methods/analyses courses: SOC 883, SOC 884, SOC 985, or SOC 986 (or another 800- or 900-level advanced methods/analyses course approved by their Guidance Committee); and
    c. at least three of the five courses in or related to a Signature Area approved by their Guidance Committee;
3. have a final course grade below 3.0 (including an N grade in the P-N grading system) in no more than two courses required by their Guidance Committee; and
4. have no more than six credits of I or D grades;

SOC considers that doctoral students are not in good academic standing if they fail to meet any one of the above four criteria.

The criteria for progress toward the doctoral degree are drawn from SOC requirements (Sections 2, 3, and 7.1 above), which comply with—and extend—MSU policy (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391). SOC considers that doctoral students are making satisfactory progress toward their degree when they meet each of the following applicable benchmarks, the timing of which are measured from their entry into the doctoral program:

1. complete at least six credits of coursework each semester in which they are enrolled until all required coursework is completed;
2. file an approved GradPlan by the beginning of their second year;
3. complete and successfully present an approved Qualifying Paper by the end of their second year or the middle of their third year;
4. complete their Comprehensive Examination by the end of their fourth year;
5. complete and successfully defend their approved Dissertation Proposal within one year of passing their Comprehensive Examination;
6. complete and successfully defend their approved Dissertation within three years of passing their Comprehensive Examinations; and
7. complete all requirements for the SOC PhD within six years.

SOC considers that doctoral students are not making satisfactory progress toward their degree if they fail to meet any one of the applicable benchmarks.

7.6.4. Notification of Unsatisfactory Performance/Progress

If the SOC GPD determines that a student is not in good academic standing and/or is not making satisfactory progress toward their degree, they will notify the student and their Guidance Committee Chair in a timely fashion. This is in compliance with GSRR Article 2.4 (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html). In this notification, the GPD will identify the specific good academic standing criteria and/or the specific satisfactory progress benchmarks that the student is not meeting.

The SOC GPD and Chairperson jointly will decide whether the nature and/or extent of the student's unsatisfactory performance justifies (a) merely notifying the student and their Guidance Committee Chair, (b) placing the student on probation (see Section 7.6.5 below), (c) withdrawing the student's graduate assistantship funding, and/or (d) dismissing the student from the doctoral program (see Section 7.7 below).

7.6.5. Academic Probation

When a doctoral student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.00 (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391), the SOC GPD **will** place the student on academic probation.

If a doctoral student otherwise fails to meet any other criteria for good academic standing and/or fails to meet more than one benchmark for making satisfactory progress toward their degree (as identified in Section 7.6.3 above), the GPD **may** place a student on academic probation.

Once a student is placed on academic probation, they will remain on probation until they meet every criterion for good academic standing and meet all applicable benchmarks for making satisfactory progress toward their degree—if they are not dismissed from the doctoral program before this.

7.6.6. Performance Improvement Plan

For those students who are especially struggling to maintain good academic standing and/or make satisfactory progress toward their degree (and are [at risk of] being placed on academic probation), the GPD, in consultation with the student's Guidance Committee Chair, may create a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for the student.

In most cases, this PIP will identify general behavioral expectations and specific performance requirements for the student to meet in their subsequent semester. These behavioral expectations and performance requirements should be ambitious but feasible. This PIP is intended to help the student swiftly address those deficiencies

preventing them from maintaining good academic standing and/or making satisfactory progress toward their degree in the SOC doctoral program. In some circumstances, a student's PIP may include them taking a leave of absence in order to more effectively address any difficulties that are influencing their academic performance.

The student, their Guidance Committee Chair, SOC GPD, and SOC Chairperson will create, review, and sign this PIP; all signatories will retain a copy for their records.

7.7. Dismissal from the Doctoral Program

In compliance with the Office of the Ombudsperson Conflict and Grievance Systems (https://ombud.msu.edu/resources-self-help/conflict-grievance-systems):

Academic units manage academic complaints, which are defined by the Code of Teaching Responsibility (https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Print.aspx?Section=514), Student Rights and Responsibilities (https://ossa.msu.edu/srr), Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html), and the Integrity of Scholarship and Grades (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s534). To resolve these concerns, please follow these steps:

1. Meet with the individual involved directly first to see if a resolution can be made.
2. Meet with the Chair/Associate Dean of the academic unit to address your concerns.
3. Request a formal hearing following the procedures outlined in the policies referenced above.

Academic student complaint data is resolved at the college level and reported up through the Provost's office to review for continuous improvement.

In compliance with GSRR Article 2.4.9 (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html), this sub-section details the reasons why a doctoral student may be dismissed from the SOC Doctoral Program. The SOC GPD and Chairperson jointly will make the final decision on whether a student is or is not dismissed from the doctoral program. In the case of an affirmative decision, dismissal from the SOC Doctoral Program will become official when the SOC Chairperson notifies the doctoral student in writing. According to GSRR Article 2.4.9:

> *All information regarding the decision is to be held in strict confidence between the student and those faculty and administrators with responsibility for the student, on a need-to-know basis; release may be only with the written consent of the student involved unless the decision becomes the substance for a grievance procedure, in which case such information shall be released to the grievance committee. All records and information created under this article shall*

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be released only in accordance with the University's published policies governing privacy and release of student records. The same privacy is to be accorded to the reasons for a student's temporary or permanent withdrawal from the University. Should a decision to dismiss be held in abeyance, pending completion of the stipulated conditions, these conditions must be communicated in writing in a timely manner to the student.

A doctoral student **will** be dismissed automatically from the SOC Doctoral Program for:

- having a grade below a 3.0 (including an N grade in the P-N grading system) in more than two courses in a student's program of study listed in GradPlan (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=129#s4005);
- failing to complete their Comprehensive Examination within five years of their entry into the SOC Doctoral Degree Program (without applying for and receiving an extension) (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391);
- failing part or all of their Comprehensive Examination twice (Section 2.6.5 above); or
- failing to complete all requirements for the SOC PhD (including successfully defend their Dissertation) within eight years of their entry into the SOC Doctoral Program (without applying for and receiving an extension) (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=391).

A doctoral student **may** be dismissed from the SOC Doctoral Program for the following reasons or in the following instances:

- failing to maintain good academic standing (see Section 7.6.3);
- failing to make satisfactory progress toward their degree (see Section 7.6.3);
- failing to improve their academic performance while on academic probation (see Section 7.6.5);
- a documented and confirmed instance of academic dishonesty in a course or program milestone (see General Student Regulation 1.00 on the Protection of Scholarship and Grades: https://ossa.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/MSU_SRR_Effective%208.1.2024_0.pdf
- also see the All-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades: (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/student-group-regs-rulings-policies-ordinances/integrity-of-scholarship-and-grades.html);
- committing scholarly misconduct in their research (as identified in Section 8.3);
- committing fraud and/or misrepresentation generally (as identified in Section 8.4.);
- violating any of MSU's general student regulations (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/index.html);
- violating MSU's Anti-Discrimination Policy (see Section 10.4) (https://u.policies.msu.edu/doctract/documentportal/08DC8FCBBBEF7442AC7BAA37AB09F817); or
- violating MSU's Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy (see Section 10.5) (https://u.policies.msu.edu/doctract/documentportal/08DB66BCB5863CD76D160F733DB5317B).

8. Integrity and Safety in Research and Creative Activities

Integrity in research and creative activities is based on sound disciplinary practices as well as on a commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. This Section lays out the department's expectations for standards of professionalism, the responsible conduct of research, and other related policies.

All SOC doctoral students and graduate faculty should regularly review MSU's Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities (https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity).

8.1. Standards of Professionalism

As professional sociologists, faculty and doctoral students should commit to improving the lives of others. Our work is central to investigating—and bettering—the human condition. Toward this end, we agree to adhere to a code of ethics that informs our interactions with each other and the larger academic and civic communities. These are articulated in the American Sociological Association's (ASA's) Code of Ethics (http://www.asanet.org/membership/code-ethics).

8.2. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

To continue to produce cutting-edge research and researchers in accordance with national standards and regulations, MSU requires that all doctoral students complete training in the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR). This training covers general guidelines and requirements specific to individual graduate programs. Completion of this training must be documented in GradPlan (https://student.msu.edu/) and Ability LMS (https://abilitylms.msu.edu). Section 2.4 in this Doctoral Handbook details the RECR training requirements for all students in the SOC Doctoral Program.

All researchers who aim to collect primary data or analyze secondary data involving human subjects must obtain prior approval from MSU's Human Research Protection Program (http://hrpp.msu.edu/).

Doctoral students also should familiarize themselves with the following MSU policies:

- Institutional Data Policy (https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/msu-institutional-data-policy),
- Guidelines on Authorship (https://vp.research.msu.edu/michigan-state-university-guidelines-authorship), and

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) regulations and policies related to laboratory safety and security (https://ehs.msu.edu/training/index.html).

8.3. Procedures for Dealing with Alleged Research Misconduct

The discipline of sociology broadly and the ASA specifically expect that sociologists-in-training and professional practitioners adhere to ethical principles during their research and creative activities. Indeed, membership in the ASA commits members to the Ethical Standards (https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/asa_code_of_ethics-june2018.pdf) and the Policies and Procedures of the Committee on Professional Ethics (https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/cope_policies_and_procedures_march_2020.pdf).

MSU SOC takes allegations of research misconduct very seriously. Briefly, the following behaviors constitute clear violations of professional standards in research and creative activities as defined in the ASA's Code of Ethics:

- egregious misrepresentation or misuse of expertise;
- concealing or failing to disclose substantial conflicts of interest;
- willfully breaching the confidentiality of research participants;
- needlessly undermining the informed consent of research participants;
- plagiarizing or taking undue credit for others' work;
- fabricating data or falsifying results;

Other, less common behaviors that also may violate our professional standards in research and creative activities may be found in the ASA Code of Ethics.

MSU's Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities guide the investigation and evaluation of alleged or apparent misconduct (https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/misconduct_procedures.html). These Procedures also provide a basis for imposing sanctions or initiating processes that may result in the imposition of sanctions on individuals who violate MSU's expectations of integrity in research and creative activities.

Within the Department, the GPD, GEC, and the student's Guidance Committee shall adjudicate a student's potential violations of professional ethical standards. Depending upon the strength of the evidence, the severity of the violation, and the context of the situation, penalties for research misconduct may include a failing course grade (if the research is performed as part of a course requirement), probation, and/or permanent dismissal from the SOC Doctoral Program (and likely reporting to the ASA). Further, SOC will report all instances of research misconduct to the SSC, Graduate School, and MSU's Research Integrity Office (RIO) (https://rio.msu.edu/). Recommendations for dismissal from these administrative units supersede departmental recommendations.

8.4. False Information

MSU has several university policies prohibiting fraud and misrepresentation, including but not limited to:

- General Student Regulation 1.00 on Protection of Scholarship and Grades (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s535);

- General Student Regulation 3.00 on Protection of Registered Student Organizations and Governing Groups (https://ossa.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/MSU_SRR_Effective%208.1.2024_0.pdf);
- General Student Regulation 5.00 on Protection of University Functions and Services (https://ossa.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/MSU_SRR_Effective%208.1.2024_0.pdf
-); and
- MSU Ordinance 14.00 on Counterfeiting, Altering, and Copying (https://trustees.msu.edu/bylaws-ordinances-policies/ordinances/ordinance-14.00.html#:~:text=.,maintained%20by%20Michigan%20State%20University).

The SOC GPD will review the conduct of any student accused of providing fraudulent information and/or engaging in misrepresentation and then determine the appropriate disciplinary action as applicable. Examples of fraud and misrepresentation include, but are not limited to, providing false statements in financial aid applications, identifying as a student of the Doctoral Program when not officially enrolled and paying university fees, providing false information about program progress, and providing false statements in application materials at any point prior to and during enrollment in the Doctoral Program. Upon review, such actions may be grounds for dismissal from the SOC Doctoral Program in Sociology.

8.5. Dissemination of Doctoral Students' Research

In keeping with MSU's public mission, the University requires that abstracts, theses, dissertations become public after the conferral of the degree; embargoes can only be pursued for a limited period (see Section 8.5.1. below). Results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination by funding agencies (see Section 8.5.2. below) cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis or dissertation to the Graduate School.

8.5.1. Hold/Embargo on Publication of Documents Submitted to ProQuest

Students submitting a thesis or dissertation to ProQuest may request a hold/embargo of ProQuest publication by contacting the Graduate School via email (msuetds.approval@grd.msu.edu) or by phone (517-353-3220). In response to the request, the Graduate School will send a form directly to the student that needs to be completed and returned to the Graduate School prior to the document submission to ProQuest. The student's Guidance Committee Chair and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the student's College must sign this form. The request for the hold/embargo may be for six months, one year, or two years. Requests for a period longer than six months must include a brief justification for the length of the requested hold/embargo.

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8.5.2. Doctoral Student Participation in University Research Organization

Doctoral students involved in an MSU University Research Organization (URO) project (https://research.msu.edu/uro) will receive both written documentation and a verbal explanation of any limitations or implications to their current or future academic progress

prior to participating on the project. Students engaging in work for a URO project undergo a two-step approval process before hiring: a consultation with a representative of the URO's office to explain the restrictions on the project; and an interview with the Graduate School Dean or Dean's designee to discuss the relationship, if any, between their work as graduate students and their participation in the project. Students must be informed that results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis or dissertation. As part of their degree program, all doctoral students must have research options to ensure the generation of appropriate results to fulfill the degree requirements, and they must have data for professional development activities that are integral to their graduate education (e.g., presentations at conferences and research seminars).

8.6. Travel Policy

All doctoral students planning to travel for work- or research-related purposes must have an up-to-date travel profile in MSU's Travel System (https://travel.msu.edu/) and should use MSU Concur (https://travel.msu.edu/education/concur-faq) to book their travel.

In the Concur system, students will complete a Travel Request for approval prior to travel. If travel is funded by SOC or any other unit at MSU, funds will not be disbursed prior to receipt of an approved Travel Request. Further, any students planning on international travel should schedule an appointment with the MSU Travel Clinic (https://travel.msu.edu/) to seek guidance about any required or recommended immunizations or vaccinations.

8.7. Graduate Student Safety and Wellness

MSU's Student Affairs and Services (https://humanmedicine.msu.edu/students/student-affairs.html) and the Graduate School (https://grad.msu.edu/grow) offer an array of resources, programs, and services to assist doctoral students in developing and maintaining good physical, psychological, and emotional health.

9. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

MSU's Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR) document (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html) establishes the rights and responsibilities of MSU graduate students and prescribes procedures to resolve allegations of violations of those rights through formal grievance hearings.

9.1. Academic Grievance Procedures

If a concern relates to a potential violation of academic rights (e.g., a dispute regarding a course grade) or an allegation of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism), a SOC doctoral student must first attempt to resolve the issue informally through a conversation with the relevant instructor/faculty member and the relevant administrator(s) (i.e., SOC GPD, SOC Chairperson, or SSC Associate Dean for Graduate Studies). When a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their conversations with the instructor/faculty member and relevant administrator(s), they may send a written request for an Academic Grievance Hearing to the SOC Chairperson.

In accordance with GSRR Article 5.1.2, SOC has established procedures for constituting our Department Hearing Board for adjudicating doctoral students' academic grievances and complaints. These procedures are codified in Article 9 of the SOC By-Laws (https://sociology.msu.edu/about/governance.html). When a doctoral student sends a written request for an Academic Grievance Hearing to the SOC Chairperson, the latter will constitute a Department Hearing Board according to the procedures in Article 9 of the SOC By-Laws. The Department Hearing Board will hold an Academic Grievance Hearing in accordance with the procedures in GSRR Articles 5.3 to 5.4.11.

Either party to the Academic Grievance Hearing may appeal the Department Hearing Board decision to the College Hearing Board following the procedures in GSRR Articles 5.4.12 to 5.7.1.

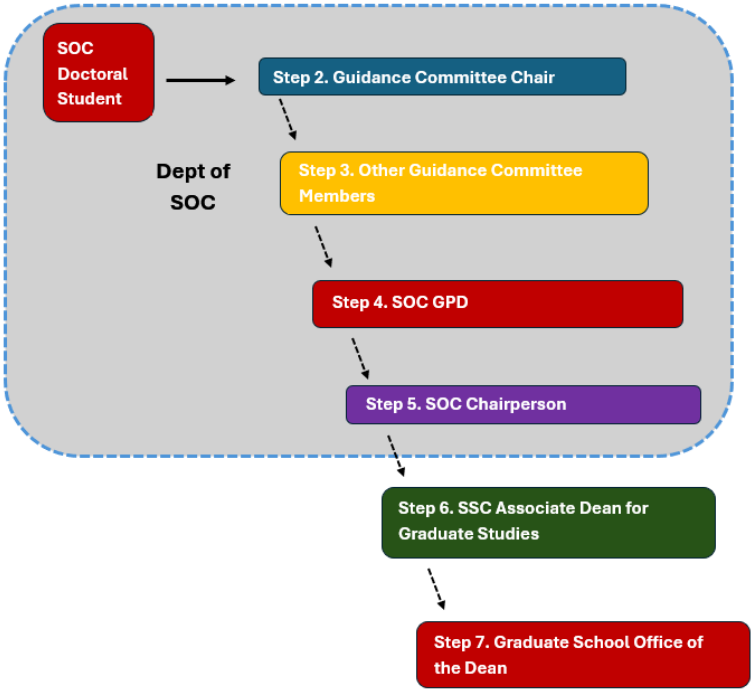
9.2. Conflict Resolution on Non-Academic Grievances

In any academic environment, community members are likely to have occasional disagreements over things such as the applicability of theories; the scope of research questions; the appropriateness of methods and/or analytical techniques; the interpretation of results; and the meaning and implications of findings. While they may deliver passionate claims, we expect that all parties to these disagreements will engage with each other in ways that are civil and productive. Further, there is potential for conflict among doctoral students, faculty, and/or staff in academic departments. These may include potential clashes over, among others, mentoring/advising relationships; communication styles; access to data or research tools; authorship rights; peer collaborations; and financial support.

SOC doctoral students may have enduring and/or escalated disagreements or conflicts with other SOC doctoral students, SOC faculty members, SOC staff members, or other undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty members, staff members, and administrators across campus. We encourage students to review relevant Department, College, and University policies or procedures. Where feasible, we expect students to try to mutually resolve disagreements or conflict with the other parties via direct discussion. In many instances, the parties will be able to de-escalate and/or resolve the conflict on their own.

If this first step does not produce a satisfactory resolution, doctoral students may proceed through the departmental conflict resolution decision tree, as illustrated in Figure 5 below. In some situations, the student's conflict may be with a person in a specific step within the decision tree. In that case, the student should bypass that step and proceed to the subsequent one. First, students should consult with their Guidance Committee Chair about the conflict—and perhaps with other members of their Guidance Committee afterwards. If the conflict is not resolved, then the SOC GPD is the typical next step, followed by the SOC Chairperson. The SOC GPD and Chairperson will make all reasonable efforts to assist the student in resolving the conflict in a way that provides support to the student and minimizes conflict between the student and the other party/parties. If each of these steps within SOC does not produce a satisfactory resolution, then the student may then gain an audience with the SSC Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. If the conflict is not resolved then, the student may consult with the Graduate School Office Dean's Office. Throughout all these steps, the student may solicit guidance and receive consultation and resources from the MSU Ombudsperson (https://ombud.msu.edu/).

Figure 5: Decision Tree for Conflict Resolution



If the conflict experienced by the doctoral student relates to any allegation of discrimination (a violation of MSU's Anti-Discrimination Policy) or gender-based harassment or sexual assault (a violation of MSU's Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy), the student and/or the party with whom they are consulting should contact MSU's Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) (https://civilrights.msu.edu/file-a-report/index.html).

If this informal process of discussing the conflict with individuals at successively higher levels of decision-making or administrative hierarchy does not resolve the situation or the student strongly believes—and has evidence to substantiate—unfair treatment or treatment that diminishes the student's rights, the student can proceed with more formal grievance procedures described in Section 9.1 above.

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10. Work-Related Policies for Graduate Assistants

The policies in this Section of the SOC Doctoral Program Handbook pertain specifically to doctoral students employed as a GTA, GRA, or GTE in the Department. The policies in Section 10 are consistent with Article 4 in the GSRR (https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html). The policies in Section 10 that apply to GTAs conform to the specifications of the current MSU-GEU CBA (https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/documents/geu-2024-2028.pdf).

10.1. Types of Graduate Assistants

MSU classifies graduate assistantships according to "function" or major assignment:

- a *Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)*—included in the Graduate Employees Union (GEU)—teaches or assists in the teaching of a course via such activities as preparing handouts, monitoring exams, grading assignments, and other instructional duties in the classroom and/or in office hours;
- a *Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)*—excluded from the GEU—assists in the management of a research project and conducts various research duties as directed by a faculty supervisor; and
- a *Teaching-Excluded Graduate Assistant (GTE)*—excluded from the GEU—either:
  - serves specifically as a grader, advisor, or consultant with no direct classroom responsibilities and/or instructional contact with students in posted office hours;
  - supervises and evaluates other graduate TAs on behalf of an instructor of record; or
  - serves as a tutor broadly without being assigned specifically to students enrolled in a given course.

10.2. Hiring of Graduate Assistants

In the months prior to each fall and spring semester, the SOC GPD and APC administer a brief survey to all students in the SOC Doctoral Program that collects information on students' GTA preferences, prior GTA or teaching experience, and potential scheduling constraints. The GPD and APC also solicit the graduate faculty to identify if they are planning on hiring any doctoral students as GRAs for the upcoming semester. The SOC GPD, in consultation with the APC, uses this information to make initial GTA assignments and send offer letters to the selected students.

SOC will make GTA, GRA, or GTE offers to those students who have remaining semesters of a departmental funding obligation (from their initial funding offer letter), who are in good academic standing, and who are making satisfactory progress toward their degree. Graduate Assistant appointments are subject to change depending on course enrollment. This could result in more than one course appointment or more than one faculty supervisor. In these instances, Graduate Assistant duties and responsibilities will be adjusted to not exceed the average hours per week for the semester. Appointment offers are contingent upon successful completion of the

Background Check and form I-9. Details surrounding the processes will be detailed in the appendix of the Graduate Assistant offer letter.

Table 3. Estimated Graduate Assistant Package for 2025-2026 and Fall 2025.

ESTIMATED GTA PACKAGE FOR 2025-2026			
EST LEVEL 1, 1/2 TIME	**IN-STATE**	**OUT-OF-STATE**	**INTERNATIONAL**
STIPEND	$22,191	$22,191	$22,191
9 CREDITS/SEMESTER TUITION	$16,871	$31, 928	$31.928
HEALTH INSURANCE	$4,334	$4,334	$4,334
TOTAL	**$43,396**	**$58,453**	**$58,453**

ESTIMATED GTA PACKAGE FOR FALL 2025			
EST. LEVEL 1, 1/2 TIME	**IN-STATE**	**OUT-OF-STATE**	**INTERNATIONAL**
STIPEND	$11, 217	$12,042	$12,042
9 CREDITS/SEMESTER TUITION	$8,435	$15,959	$15,959
HEALTH INSURANCE	$2,167	$2,167	$2,167
TOTAL	**$21,819**	**$30,168**	**$30,168**

**These estimated rates are based on a Level 1, half-time GTA appointment, reflecting the minimum package for a Department of Sociology GTA.

SOC makes Graduate Assistant appointments for one complete semester only. The semester start and end dates are as follows:

- fall semester: August 16 to December 31
- spring semester: January 1 to May 15
- summer semester: May 16 to August 15

MSU allows units to hire Graduate Assistants with one of the following appointments:

- 1/4 time appointment is an average of 10 hours per week for the semester;
- 1/2 time appointment is an average of 20 hours per week for the semester; and
- 3/4 time appointment is an average of 30 hours per week for the semester.

The standard appointment for most Graduate Assistants across campus is 1/2 time.

MSU Human Resources identifies three “levels” of Graduate Assistantships that generally align with degree acquisition, matriculation, and work experience (https://hr.msu.edu/employment/graduate-assistants/faqs.html).

A SOC doctoral student may earn a **Level 1** TA, RA, or TE Graduate Assistantship only by meeting **each** of the following criteria:

- be an admitted MSU graduate student;
- have a Bachelor’s degree; and
- have less than two semesters of experience as a Graduate Assistant.

A SOC doctoral student may earn a **Level 2** TA, RA, or TE Graduate Assistantship only by meeting **each** of the following criteria:

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- be an admitted MSU graduate student;
- have a Master's degree OR have completed their Qualifying Paper requirement OR have earned 30+ graduate credits OR have at least two semesters of experience as a Graduate Assistant; and
- have not met all of the criteria required for Level 3.

A SOC doctoral student may earn a **Level 3** TA Graduate Assistantship only by meeting **each** of the following criteria:

- be an admitted MSU graduate student;
- have a Master's degree OR have completed their Qualifying Paper requirement OR have earned 30+ graduate credits; and
- have at least six semesters of experience as a Graduate Assistant in SOC or in a department considered relevant by the SOC Chairperson.

A SOC doctoral student may earn a **Level 3** RA or TE Graduate Assistantship only by meeting **each** of the following criteria:

- be an admitted MSU graduate student;
- have successfully completed their Comprehensive Exam; and
- have at least six semesters of experience as an RA or TE Graduate Assistant or equivalent in SOC or in a department considered relevant by the SOC Chairperson.

10.3. Evaluating and Terminating Graduate Assistants

At the end of each semester, faculty supervisors of assigned GRAs complete the departmental GRA Evaluation Form (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html), which their GRA also signs. The faculty supervisor submits this completed form to the SOC APC. At the end of each semester, faculty supervisors of assigned GTAs complete the departmental GTA Evaluation Form (https://sociology.msu.edu/graduate/forms.html), which their GTA also signs. The faculty supervisor submits this completed form to the SOC APC. The SOC APC also receives from either the SOC Associate Chair or Chairperson the results of the department's end-of-semester student evaluation of each SOC GTA. The SOC GPD, in consultation with the APC, use these completed GTA/GRA Evaluation Forms (and the student evaluation data for GTAs) to evaluate the performance of our graduate assistants each semester.

SOC rarely acts to terminate any graduate assistants while work is in progress during a semester. The faculty supervisor of a GRA or the SOC GPD overseeing all SOC GTAs (and GTEs) may only take steps to terminate any graduate assistant during a semester in the case of an egregious failure to perform work responsibilities or a gross dereliction of duties. Prior to any step toward termination, the respective supervisor of the graduate assistant will meet with the student to discuss their work performance and provide constructive feedback to help them improve. If, after a reasonable amount of time, the graduate assistant's performance does not substantially improve, then the respective supervisor may take steps to terminate the student.

10.4. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

MSU maintains student education records and is responsible for their access to and release in accordance with FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) (https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/PrivacyGuidelines.aspx). Details on MSU's FERPA guidelines are in a section called "Michigan State University Access to Student Information" in the Academic Programs Catalog (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s542). While working as a GTA, SOC doctoral students are required to comply with MSU's FERPA guidelines.

10.5. Code of Teaching Responsibility

MSU's Code of Teaching Responsibility (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s514) details the expected duties and core responsibilities of all MSU instructors. All SOC GTAs must comply with this policy, especially when leading recitation or lab sessions or independently teaching their own course.

10.6. Anti-Discrimination Policy

As MSU employees, all SOC GTAs, GRAs, and GTEs must comply with MSU's Anti-Discrimination Policy (https://u.policies.msu.edu/doctract/documentportal/08DC8FCBBBEF7442AC7BAA37AB09F817).

10.7. Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy

As MSU employees, all SOC GTAs, GRAs, and GTEs must comply with MSU's Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) Policy (https://u.policies.msu.edu/doctract/documentportal/08DB66BCB5863CD76D160F733DB5317B). Prior to their first semester of employment at MSU and on an annual basis, all graduate assistants must complete MSU's online training about the RVSM Policy.

10.8. MSU-GEU Collectively Bargained Agreement and GTAs

The current collectively bargained agreement (CBA) between MSU and the Graduate Employees Union (GEU) (https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/documents/geu-2024-2028.pdf) is operational from May 16, 2024, to May 15, 2028. This MSU-GEU CBA applies only to those MSU graduate students employed as GTAs. See Article 4 of the MSU-GEU CBA for further details on less than common instances where GTAs would be excluded from the CBA.

This MSU-GEU CBA dictates terms and conditions of employment for MSU GTAs and includes agreements on rates of pay, hours, health care, and procedures for the resolution of differences. The CBA also contains policies on jury duty, medical leaves, and grief/bereavement leaves.

10.9. Medical Leaves

See Article 18 of the MSU-GEU CBA (https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/index.html) for medical leave policies for MSU graduate students employed as GTAs. The following text in Academic Programs contains information about medical leave policies for MSU graduate students employed as GRAs or GTEs: https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s351.

11. University Resources

Academic Programs Catalog: https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms
The Academic Programs Catalog contains information about all academic programs throughout the university as well as general university policies, procedures, and regulations.

Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP):
https://u.policies.msu.edu/doctract/documentportal/08DC8FCBBBEF7442AC7BAA37AB09F817
The ADP outlines the types of prohibited discrimination and harassment at MSU. This link takes you to the policy itself and the users' manual.

Authorship, Guidelines on: https://vp.research.msu.edu/michigan-state-university-guidelines-authorship
All MSU researchers are encouraged to share their work in the form accepted within their discipline. The intent of this document is to serve as a general guideline for consideration of important issues surrounding authorship as scholars construct a piece of work for public distribution.

Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation:
https://entrepreneurship.msu.edu/
This Institute is MSU's clearinghouse and incubator for all things entrepreneurial that might lead to capital ventures.

Code of Teaching Responsibility:
https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s514
Satisfaction of teaching responsibilities by instructors is essential to the successful functioning of a university. This Code details expected duties and core responsibilities of all MSU instructors.

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program:
https://ora.msu.edu/RECR/citi.html
MSU's Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA) has licensed hundreds of online CITI courses for the entire MSU community. These courses focus on Responsible Conduct of Research (RECR), human subjects protection, and animal care, among many others.

Collectively Bargained Agreement between MSU and the Graduate Employees Union: https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/index.html
This page links to the current Collectively Bargained Agreement (CBA) between MSU and the GEU (May 16, 2024, to May 15, 2028), which applies only to those MSU graduate students employed as GTAs. See Article 4 of the MSU-GEU CBA for further details on less than common instances where GTAs would be excluded from the CBA.

Department of Sociology: https://sociology.msu.edu/

The SOC website contains our departmental calendar, news stories, member biographies/pages, as well as key information about our undergraduate program and doctoral program.

Desire2Learn (D2L): https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/

D2L is the primary learning management system (LMS) used by MSU. You have access to D2L once you have an msu.edu email address. You will need to know how to use D2L for your employee and student responsibilities. Trainings on D2L use can be found here: https://help.d2l.msu.edu/training

Digital Accessibility Policy: https://webaccess.msu.edu/policy

This policy reflects MSU's aspiration and intent to live the University's core values of collaboration, equity, excellence, integrity, and respect and the University's commitment to eliminate barriers to access, challenge discrimination and bias, and address past and present inequalities.

Disability Accommodations for Graduate Assistants: https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/

Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs, and TEs) are both students and employees. They are thus eligible for disability accommodations in both of these roles, and these accommodations are provided through distinct documents coordinated by RCPD. Students receive an accommodation letter. Employees receive SEADs (Statements of Employee Accommodation Determination). Graduate assistants can register for both situations.

Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy:
https://civilrights.msu.edu/policies/disability-and-reasonable-accommodation-policy.html

This university policy prohibits discrimination and harassment against a qualified individual with a disability. The policy describes the process for seeking reasonable accommodations to ensure equal employment opportunities and equal access to MSU programs, services, and facilities.

Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs): https://grad.msu.edu/etd

Graduate Students must submit their completed master's thesis or doctoral dissertation to the Graduate School following the guidelines on this page. One of the final steps of this process is submission of the thesis or dissertation to ProQuest (https://grad.msu.edu/etd/electronic-submission-to-proquest). While submitting to ProQuest, authors may create an ORCID ID (https://orcid.org/), which is a persistent digital identifier that the author owns and controls and that distinguishes them from every other research.

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Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):
https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/PrivacyGuidelines.aspx
MSU maintains student education records and is responsible for their access to and release in accordance with FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g). Details on MSU's FERPA guidelines are in a section called "Michigan State University Access to Student Information" in the Academic Programs Catalog (https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s542).

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General Student Regulations:
https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/general-student-regulations.html
Regulations established within the University community (students, trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff) to secure the safety of members of the University community and University facilities, maintain order, and ensure the successful operation of the institution.

Graduate Assistant Offer Letters Template: https://grad.msu.edu/offer-templates
In collaboration with Human Resources (HR), the Graduate School maintains and updates these GTA, GRA, and GTE offer letter templates. They contain information that must be conveyed for appointments to be processed through the MSU hiring system. Further, the GTA offer letter template meets all of the requirements of the MSU-GEU CBA and must be used for all GTA appointments.
- MSU-GEU Contract May 2024 – May 2028: https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/documents/geu-2024-2028.pdf

The Graduate School: https://grad.msu.edu/
As seen throughout this Handbook, the Graduate School offers a plentitude of programming and opportunities that are relevant for SOC doctoral students. In addition, it provides an array of important resources including, but not limited to, the following:
- diversity, equity, and inclusion programs: https://grad.msu.edu/diversity
- events: https://grad.msu.edu/calendar
- forms: https://grad.msu.edu/forms
- funding: https://grad.msu.edu/funding
- graduate life and wellness: https://grad.msu.edu/graduate-student-life
- mentoring: https://grad.msu.edu/optimizing-mentoring
- policy information: https://grad.msu.edu/policies-and-procedures
- professional development: https://grad.msu.edu/professional-development
- research integrity: https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity
- traveling scholar opportunities: https://grad.msu.edu/traveling-scholar
- University Committee on Graduate Studies: https://grad.msu.edu/ucgs
- Graduate Educator Advancement and Teaching: https://grad.msu.edu/great
- Office of Well-Being: https://grad.msu.edu/GROW
- Out-of-State tuition waivers: https://grad.msu.edu/out-state-tuition-waiver-external-fellowships-traineeships-and-internships

Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships, Guidelines on:
https://grad.msu.edu/optimizing-mentoring
These guidelines highlight the essential role of advising and mentoring. All students have the right to expect thoughtful, timely, and accurate advising, which involves providing basic information about requirements, policies, and procedures that apply to everyone.

Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR):
https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html

The GSSR addresses student conduct, academic pursuits, keeping of records, and publications. It describes procedures for formulating regulations governing student conduct and for providing due process in the adjudication of student disciplinary cases. It defines channels and procedures for student complaints and grievances.

Human Research Protection Program: https://hrpp.msu.edu/

MSU's HRPP includes the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committees and the IRB and Compliance offices. HRPP's primary mission is the protection of individuals who are the subjects of research. It sets forth the structure, policies, and procedures to implement this mission.

Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion: https://inclusion.msu.edu/
MSU's Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) provides leadership, resources, and support for advancing a diverse and inclusive campus community, consistent with MSU's core values.

Integrity of Scholarship and Grades:
https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/student-group-regs-rulings-policies-ordinances/integrity-of-scholarship-and-grades.html

This all-university policy addresses principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records, referred to generally as academic misconduct.

The Libraries: https://lib.msu.edu/
MSU maintains several libraries in addition to the Main Library, even though the latter contains most of the university's monograph, periodical, map, recording, art, and archival collections.

Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS): https://oiss.isp.msu.edu/
OISS provides support to MSU international students, scholars, and their families through:
- advising on and facilitating compliance with U.S. immigration regulations;

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- conducting orientations and other special programming that help international students and scholars integrate into and adjust to MSU's academic, cultural, and social life; and
- serving as a liaison with US government agencies, foreign embassies, sponsors, and educational foundations that support international students and scholars.

Campus Health Services: https://uhw.msu.edu/health-and-wellbeing-services/medical-care/campus-health-services

This site comprehensively describes health services offered at MSU including Olin Health Center, the primary location for: health care for illness and injuries; mental health care and counseling; physical therapy; and immunizations.

Ombudsperson, Office of the: https://ombud.msu.edu/

The Office of the University Ombudsperson offers a confidential place to discuss both academic and nonacademic concerns including administrative issues, workplace issues, or any concern that may relate to MSU students. The Ombuds offers an environment where you can talk with a confidential and impartial resource about a complaint, conflict, or problem. They are not part of any formal University process; they do not take sides in disputes; and they operate independently of MSU.

University Outreach and Engagement: https://engage.msu.edu/

The Office of University Outreach and Engagement facilitates university-wide efforts to create an ecosystem of engagement by supporting the engaged activities of faculty, staff, and students; fostering public access to university expertise and resources; and by advocating for exemplary scholarship, nationally and internationally. In all of its work, University Outreach and Engagement emphasizes university-community partnerships that are collaborative, participatory, empowering, systemic, transformative, and anchored in scholarship.

Resources for research and academic integrity: https://ossa.msu.edu/academic-integrity-resources-students

This site includes information on MSU's procedures for the investigation and evaluation of alleged or apparent misconduct. These procedures also provide a basis for imposing sanctions or initiating processes that may result in the imposition of sanctions on individuals who violate the MSU's expectations of integrity in research and creative activities.

Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA): https://orrs.msu.edu/

ORA, part of the office of the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation (SVPRI), ORA is composed of several compliance units that provide regulatory oversight and/or operational management of research activities. Its mission across campus is to:

- promote the responsible conduct of research,
- assure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations, and university policies,

- protect the rights and welfare of research subjects,
- protect public health and safety,
- assure the objectivity and integrity of research.

ORA manages several resources, such as MSU's Compliance Training System (known as Ability LMS) and MSU's human research approval system (known as Click).

Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR): https://civilrights.msu.edu/

OCR's website includes information on a range of civil rights issues, including the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) policy and instructions on how to report RVSM and other civil rights violations.

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD): https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/

RCPD's mission is to maximize ability and opportunity for full participation by persons with disabilities. To this end, RCPD: assesses and documents disability, academic, and workplace needs; builds and facilitates individual plans for reasonable accommodations; links individuals with technology, education, and resources; and extends independence through auxiliary aids, disability-related information, and self-advocacy.

Student Life & Engagement Division: https://sle.msu.edu/

The Student Life & Engagement Division is the home for: https://mccenter.msu.edu/; Gender and Sexuality Campus Center; health, wellness, and safety; leadership and experiential learning; career exploration; career services; community and engaged learning; recreational sports and fitness services; Student Parent Resource Center; Student Veterans Resources; and others.

The Writing Center: https://writing.msu.edu/

With locations across campus, the Writing Center provides one-on-one and group writing consultations, various writing-specific workshops, as well as writing groups for graduate students and faculty.

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