

# **SOCIOLOGY**

## **Guide to the Graduate Program**

**2022-2023**

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**UNL Department of Sociology**  
**Graduate Program Guidelines**  
**2022-2023**

This document describes the procedures of the Graduate Program in the Department of Sociology. These Guidelines supplement the requirements published in the Graduate Studies Bulletin of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Students are advised to study the requirements set forth in that document as well as the Sociology Guidelines. *Keep in mind that the final responsibility for following all policies and meeting all requirements and deadlines for graduate programs rests with the student.*

Students are subject to the Guidelines in force at the time they begin course work. Procedures may be changed or modified during the year. Consequently, careful attention should be given to the departmental memos as they are circulated. If the Guidelines change during their program, students may elect to follow subsequent revisions or modifications of the Guidelines.

**I. Goals of a Sociology Graduate Education**

**A. Knowledge**

- *Foundational*: An understanding of the foundational theory and methods within the discipline.
- *Substantive Specialty*: Depth of knowledge within a substantive specialty area of the discipline. An area of expertise within a field in which the student is aware of the debates among scholars, where their research fits, and the gaps in the literature.
- *Breadth*: A breadth of substantive knowledge across the discipline, providing the ability to discuss the discipline more broadly and converse with other sociologists not in one's area of study.
- *Interdisciplinary*: Understanding of how the discipline of sociology interacts with other disciplines outside of the student's primary area of substantive research focus.

**B. Skills**

- *Comprehension*: The ability to read the academic literature within the student's substantive research interest area, the wider discipline of sociology, and work in other disciplines that overlaps with the student's primary substantive interest areas.
- *Original Research*: The ability to develop ideas for and propose original research along with the methodological skills necessary to carry out a research project, including proficiency in advanced quantitative data analysis techniques.
- *Communication*: The ability to communicate to a diverse audience both within and outside of the discipline of sociology. Effectively communicate one's research ideas and express their value and significance in presentations (oral and poster) and academic writings (e.g., research proposals and empirical manuscripts).

- *Teaching*: The ability to fully develop undergraduate courses by writing a syllabus, creating lesson plans, developing instructive assignments, and managing the classroom. Having a strong teaching philosophy statement that corresponds to classroom practices.

### **C. Values**

- *Professional Engagement*: Understanding the importance of engaging key sociology professional associations (e.g., ASA, SSSP, MSS) as well as interdisciplinary associations closely related to the student's substantive specialty area of research focus (e.g., NCFR, PAA, ASC, SRA).
- *Collaboration*: The need to establish strong collaborative connections as well as establishing clear role expectations within these relationships. Prior to leaving graduate school develop a network of actual or potential coauthors while bringing in a clear independent contribution to any group research project.
- *Mentoring*: Recognition that developing cultural capital and attaining career aspirations must come from more than just the advisor/advisee relationship to also include the entire supervisory committee and near peers (i.e., other graduate students).
- *Governance*: Recognizing the importance of faculty governance by exercising leadership skills and being a good citizen in service to the department, university and discipline.
- *Ethics*: Ethical conduct of research and accurate reporting of research findings. Having an attitude of respect toward your students and sustaining a fair and impartial classroom, while enforcing high standards of academic integrity.

## **II. Research Areas**

### **A. Core Areas of Emphasis**

Many Faculty concentrate their research in one of these four core areas (with sub-areas noted).

- Family
  - Aging
  - Family
  - Life Course
- Health
  - Physical Health
  - Mental Health
  - Substance Use
- Social Inequality
  - Race
  - Class
  - Gender
- Research Methods
  - Quantitative Data Analysis
  - Social Network Analysis
  - Survey Methodologies
  - Qualitative Methods

## **B. Additional Areas of Faculty Expertise**

At least one faculty concentrates their research in these areas. These areas may change in response to the composition of the faculty.

- Computational Social Science
- Crime and Deviance
- Demography
- Homelessness
- Social Networks
- Social Psychology
- Sociology of Religion
- Sexuality

## **C. Interdisciplinary Program Specializations**

UNL offers many specializations and/or minors to accompany a sociology MA and/or PhD. Specializations will connect graduate students to faculty outside of the sociology department. Students apply to specialization programs after admission to the UNL sociology graduate program. Many of UNL's sociology graduate students apply to:

- Women's and Gender Studies Program
- Institute for Ethnic Studies
- Environmental Studies

## **III. Graduate Courses**

For all SOCI classes, the department maintains a regular course rotation for: a) the core graduate-only seminars, b) the 400/800 courses, and c) the 900-level substantive graduate-only seminars. The course rotation schedule is available upon request and is subject to change depending on faculty availability and student interest/enrollment. The course rotation principles include: (1) regular rotation of seminars in the department's core areas of emphasis, (2) rotation of seminars in the additional areas of faculty expertise, as possible, and (3) requests from graduate students regarding their program needs and interests. The department does not set the course schedule for courses listed with a department designation other than sociology.

### **A. Core Graduate-Only Coursework**

These courses fulfill requirements for the MA or PhD program.

SOCI 855. History of Sociological Theory

SOCI 862. Basic Regression Analysis

SOCI 867. Advanced Regression Analysis

SOCI 864. Sociological Theory

SOCI 863. Advanced Social Research Methods

SOCI 995a. Teaching Sociology (1-credit)

SOCI 995b. Graduate Study and Careers (1-credit)

SOCI 995d. Publications

## **B. Substantive 400/800 Sociology Coursework**

These classes are combined graduate and undergraduate courses.

SOCI 835. Mass Communication

SOCI 842. Personality and Social Structure

SOCI 843. Sociology of Mental Health

SOCI 844. Social Demography

SOCI 845. Sociology of Urban Areas

SOCI 848. Family Diversity

SOCI 849. Perspectives on Families

SOCI 852: Sociology of Religion

SOCI 854: Physical Health Disparities (cross-listed with ETHN)

SOCI 860. Education and Society

POLS 866. Pro-seminar in International Relations I (cross-listed with Sociology)

SOCI 870. Sociology of Occupations and Professions

PSYC 871. Human Sexuality and Society (cross-listed with Sociology)

SOCI 874. Sociology of Deviance

NRES 875. Water Quality Strategy (cross-listed with Sociology)

ANTH 878. Pro-seminar in Latin American Studies

SOCI 880. Social Inequality: Stratification and Life Chances

SOCI 881. Minority Groups (cross-listed with ETHN)

SOCI 886. Sociology of Gender

SOCI 883. Political Sociology

SOCI 896. Special Topics in Crime, Deviance and Social Control

SOCI 892. Special Topics

## **C. Substantive Sociology 900-Level Graduate-Only Coursework**

The topic of these seminars may vary each time it is offered. Thus, students are allowed to take up nine hours under each seminar number.

901. Seminar in Sociological Theory

903. Seminar in Health

904. Seminar in Family

905. Seminar in Stratification, Class and Inequality

906. Seminar in Race and Ethnicity

907. Seminar in Sex and Gender

908. Seminar in Crime and Deviance

998. Special Topics Seminar

#### **D. Additional Methods Coursework**

Courses labeled below with an asterisk (\*) are not graduate-only seminars.

SOCI 807. Strategies of Social Research: Qualitative Methods \*

SOCI 865. Survey Design and Analysis\*

SOCI 902. Seminar in Research Methods

PSYC 947. Questionnaire Design (cross-listed with Sociology)

#### **E. Non-Coursework Credits**

SOCI 897. Field Work in Sociology

Students may enroll for 1 to 6 credit hours. This course is designed to allow graduate students to apply the concepts and methods of sociology while working for public agencies, non-profit groups, or businesses. Their work may be as paid employees or as volunteer interns. Students wishing to take SOCI 897 hours must complete a brief form describing the nature of the work, obtain approval from the Graduate Chair, and file the form in the Sociology office prior to enrolling.

SOCI 899. Masters Thesis

Students may sign up for a maximum of 10 credit hours for work on their masters thesis during the regular academic year. However, only 6 hours of M.A. thesis credit may be applied to the Ph.D. program.

SOCI 996. Research Other Than Thesis/Dissertation

These credits entail independent work under the supervision of a faculty member. To be effective, the faculty member and graduate student must negotiate a set of written guidelines for the work to be completed with these hours. A written agreement must clearly articulate (but need not be limited to): a) the graduate student's goals, b) expectations that the faculty member and graduate student have about their separate responsibilities (e.g., division of labor, monthly meetings, written work, feedback, and so forth), c) a timeline for when the work will be completed, and d) the grade type for the credits (i.e., pass/fail or letter grade) as well as how a grade will be determined. Students wishing to take 996 hours must complete a short form, provide a copy of the written agreement, obtain approval from the Graduate Chair, and file everything with the Sociology office prior to enrolling. Students should consult with their advisers or committees before undertaking 996 hours.

SOCI 999. Doctoral Dissertation

Students are required to have a minimum of 12 doctoral dissertation credits in their Program of Study.

#### **IV. Procedures for the Master of Arts Degree in Sociology**

The minimal requirements for the M.A. degree consists of: a) completing 24 hours of graduate coursework, b) meeting a distribution requirement, c) preparing a thesis (for which six to ten additional hours of credit are given). At least one-half of the hours presented for the M.A. must be in the Department of Sociology. The work required for the M.A. degree is expected to be completed in two years, but must be completed in ten consecutive calendar years. The steps in obtaining the M.A. degree are outlined below.

## A. Core Curriculum Requirements

- i. Students must pass SOCI 995a (Teaching Sociology) during their first Fall semester and SOCI 995b (Graduate Study and Careers) during their first Spring semester. In the first two years of the program (full and part-time) students must also pass SOCI 855 (History of Sociological Theory), SOCI 862 (Basic Regression Analysis), SOCI 863 (Advanced Social Research Methods), and SOCI 867 (Advanced Regression Analysis) as part of the 24 hours of course requirements. The minimal acceptable grade for any credits at the 800 or 900 level is a "B" (i.e., a grade of B- or lower does not meet this requirement). Credits completed with an unacceptable grade may not be used as part of the 30 credits required in a Memorandum of Courses.

Six hours of coursework credits must be earned in sociology (i.e., registered with SOCI) graduate-only 900-level seminars. Core-requirements (i.e., 995a, 995b), SOCI 996, and other non-coursework credit hours, may not be used for this requirement. In the second year of study, MA students are required to enroll in a minimum of three hours of graduate-only 900-level sociology seminars.

If students are unable to finish the required work for a course in the time period specified for the course (usually a semester, except for thesis hours), they may request an "Incomplete." These are given at the discretion of the professor. Should a student receive an incomplete, the work must be completed within a period of six months. If this is not done, the professor has the option of giving the student a failing grade, extending the time for completing the required work, or referring the case to the Graduate Committee for a decision.

- ii. Students are required to have a minimum of 6 thesis credits (SOCI 899) and may only count a maximum of 10 hours toward their MA degree.

## B. Distribution Requirement

Each candidate for the M.A. degree must successfully pass one sociology course at the 800 or 900 level in three of the four core areas listed below:

- Family
- Health
- Inequality
- Methods

The Graduate Chair will determine if the courses offered under special topics count toward fulfilling the distribution requirement and, if so, which area(s) they fall under. Students have the option to request approval from the Graduate Chair for allocating a course that may fall under more than one of the distribution requirements be allocated to their preferred area. The distribution requirement may not be satisfied through enrollment in SOCI 996 hours or required theory and methods courses. A single course may not be used to meet more than one distribution requirement. In other words, students must take three different courses of appropriate topic to meet the distribution requirement.

### **C. Thesis and Degree Requirements**

A Memorandum of Courses must be submitted to Graduate Studies during the semester in which a student will have accumulated a total of 15 hours of graduate credit. By this time, students should have selected one faculty member in the Department of Sociology to serve as a Thesis Adviser. Students should complete their Memorandum of Course form in consultation with their adviser, who is required to sign it. Under the guidance of an adviser, a student writes a masters thesis. Although most theses should be written along the lines of a journal article, others may require greater length.

A Degree Application must be submitted to Graduate Studies at the beginning of the semester in which the student desires to graduate; however, it is the thesis Advisor who decides whether a student is ready to graduate. A Final Examination Report form must be submitted prior to the oral defense of the thesis (check Graduate Studies web site for deadlines) and shortly thereafter a Preliminary Draft of your thesis. Before a thesis is accepted, it must be reviewed and approved by the student's advisor and two additional sociology faculty members. The final deposit of an approved thesis must be submitted to Graduate Studies and a copy of the thesis also must be given to the Sociology office.

### **V. Procedures for the Ph.D. Degree in Sociology**

The minimal requirements for the Ph.D. degree consist of: a) completing 90 hours of graduate credit with a minimum of 45 credit hours being coursework with an acceptable grade), b) meeting the residency requirement - see Graduate Studies website, c) forming a supervisory committee and POS, d) teaching experience and portfolio, e) passing one written comprehensive examination in a core content area, and f) preparing a doctoral dissertation.

#### **A. Core Curriculum Requirements**

- i. Students receiving the Ph.D. must complete the courses required for the M.A. (i.e., SOCI 855, 862, 863, 867, 995a, and 995b). In addition to the M.A. course requirements, Ph.D. students must pass SOCI 864 (Sociological Theory), SOCI 995d (Publications), and one graduate-only methods course (SOCI 902 or equivalent) beyond the required MA methods courses. The minimal acceptable grade for any credits at the 800 or 900 level is a "B" (i.e., a grade of B- or lower does not meet this requirement). Credits completed with an unacceptable grade may not be used as part of the 90 credits required in a Program of Studies.
  - Those entering with a M.A. degree from another institution are expected to take the required MA courses in their first year in the program. Students entering with an MA may request a waiver from specific course requirements. Waiver requests are due to the Graduate Chair at least four weeks prior to the beginning of the semester in which the course is being offered. Students will be required to provide various documents demonstrating the student's mastery of the subject material. The Graduate Chair in consultation with faculty instructors of the requested course to be waived will deny or accept the waiver request. Students will be informed of the Graduate Chair's decision no later than the week before classes start.

- ii. A minimum of 18 hours of coursework must be substantive 900-level sociology seminars. Students may not use non-coursework credit hours (e.g., 996) or professional development courses (e.g., 995d) to fulfill this requirement.
- iii. If students are unable to finish the required work for a course in the time period specified for the course (usually a semester, except for dissertation hours), they may request an “Incomplete.” These are given at the discretion of the professor. Should a student receive an incomplete, the work must be completed within a period of six months. If this is not done, the professor has the option of giving the student a failing grade, extending the time for completing the required work, or referring the case to the Graduate Committee for a decision.
- iv. A maximum of 45 non-coursework credit hours may be accumulated in a student’s Program of Study. Students, however, may not count more than six hours of MA thesis credits (SOC 899) and no more than nine hours of independent study credits (SOC 996) in their Program of Study. Students are restricted from taking more than 6 hours of dissertation credits (SOC 999) until they have successfully defended their dissertation proposal. Students are required to have a minimum of 12 doctoral dissertation credits in their Program of Study (SOC 999).

**B. Residency Requirement**

- i. See Graduate Studies website for more information.

**C. Department on Campus Presence**

- 1. Faculty expect MA students to be present on campus during their MA program in its entirety for all classwork, GRA/GTA purposes, master thesis work, and departmental activities (e.g. colloquiums).
- 2. Faculty expect students to be on campus during their Ph.D. program for all classwork, comprehensive examinations, GRA/GTA purposes, dissertation proposal defense, dissertation defense, and departmental activities (e.g. colloquiums). After passing the comprehensive exam and defending the dissertation proposal, the student is considered ABD (all but dissertation). In rare situations, students may request to not be on campus after reaching ABD status but must make this request in writing and receive approval in writing from (1) their dissertation committee chair(s), (2) the Graduate Chair, and (3) the Department Chair.
- 3. To accomplish department goals, students present on campus will have higher funding priority in the department.

**D. Supervisory Committee and the Program of Studies**

Following admission to the Ph.D. program, the student should, as soon as possible, select a willing chair for the Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Chair, in consultation with the student, forms a Supervisory Committee. The student and Supervisory Chair develop a Program of Studies in consultation with the Supervisory Committee. Prior to the formation of a Supervisory Committee, the student's program will be planned on a semester-to-semester basis in consultation with the Graduate Chair.

- i. Students submit the Appointment of Supervisory Committee form and then the Program of Studies form to Graduate Studies during the semester prior to completing 45 credit hours toward the PhD degree – this includes MA and transfer credits.
  - If a student submits these forms after completing 45 credit hours, then the Supervisory Chair needs to contact the Doctoral Programs Specialist before filing the paperwork and request an exception from having to complete more than 90 credits for the Program of Studies.
- ii. The Supervisory Committee must consist of at least four Nebraska University graduate faculty. At least three Sociology graduate faculty must be on the committee and at least one Supervisory Committee member must be external to the Sociology Department.
- iii. After the Supervisory Committee has been constituted, the Committee has the primary responsibility for working with the student on his or her program. The Supervisory Committee may require a student to take any course which the Committee believes necessary for the student's successful completion of the Ph.D. program. This may include one or more research skills, including a foreign language. If applicable, it is the Supervisory Committee's responsibility to evaluate all transfer credit from other institutions or programs. It is the student's responsibility to make sure they have planned a Program of Study that conforms to all curriculum requirements. It is the supervisory committee's task to approve the Program of Study. After a Program of Studies is filed with Graduate Studies, the Supervisory Committee must approve any subsequent changes to the Program of Studies. Once approved, the changes are submitted to Graduate Studies by the Graduate Chair.
- iv. The Supervisory Committee will meet with the student on a regular basis. The Supervisory Committee Chair will review and sign off on the student's annual report.

#### **E. Teaching Experience and Portfolio**

PhD students are required to obtain a significant teaching experience during their residence as part of their overall professional development. For the vast majority of students, this will entail being the instructor of record for at least one class taught in the Sociology Department at UNL (fall, spring, or summer term). In special circumstances, this requirement may be fulfilled by working under the supervision of a faculty member for one academic year (two semesters) as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). The teaching requirement may be waived for international, part-time or unfunded students upon request to the Graduate Chair. The Graduate Chair, in consultation with the Graduate Committee and the student's Supervisory Committee, decides if a waiver is granted or alternative assignment from being instructor of record may be pursued.

To fully complete this requirement, students must submit a teaching portfolio for review and approval by their Supervisory Committee (excluding the outside committee member) and the Graduate Chair. Students are strongly encouraged to submit a Teaching Portfolio at the time of their 4<sup>th</sup> year review; however, it must be submitted to the Supervisory Committee for review at least two weeks before the date of the Oral Dissertation Examination and approved by the Supervisory Committee (excluding the outside member) on or before the date of the Oral Dissertation Examination. Upon approval by the Supervisory Committee, the Portfolio is sent to the Graduate Chair for final approval. The following components must be included in the Teaching Portfolio to demonstrate the student's ability to develop, teach, and reflect on an undergraduate course:

- teaching philosophy statement (not more than 4 pages)
- sample of one course syllabus as well as example assignments or tests
- summary of the student's quantitative and qualitative evaluations for all courses taught at UNL
- a letter written by the Supervisory Chair or Committee Member evaluating the student's teaching abilities based on a review of teaching materials and an observation of a class (the observation can be for either an in-person or online class)

## **F. Comprehensive Exam**

When coursework is substantially completed for the Program of Study, the student must pass a comprehensive examination. Comprehensive exams may not be taken before completion of the M.A., and core theory and research methods courses, except with the permission of the Graduate Committee.

### *a. Structure of Comprehensive Exam*

The comprehensive exam will take the form of a literature review article covering one subfield in sociology. The review is not simply a summary of the subfield but should represent a critical examination of the literature. Students are expected to develop their own argument about the major findings and ideas of the subfield. The review should cover foundational literature, the broad evolution of the subfield, recent controversies, debates and major findings (i.e., in the last 10 years), and an argument about where the field is (or should be) going. The review should begin broadly, laying out the major theoretical ideas, methods, assumptions and findings of the subfield. The review should also include more specific examples, relevant for developing the larger arguments. Students should view articles in journals such as *Annual Review of Sociology* and *Sociology Compass* as good models for their own article.

The goal of the review article is for students to demonstrate a thorough understanding of a particular subfield in sociology, sufficient to both develop an independent research project that would contribute to the subfield and to teach an undergraduate course in their subfield of choice. Students will also demonstrate skills gained in developing arguments, making substantive connections, and learning to write in a clear, effective manner.

Students are expected to identify the scope of the subfield and develop the reading list for the review article in conjunction with the Chair of their comprehensive exam (henceforth: Chair), who must approve the scope of the review article. Students must ask a Sociology faculty member to serve as Chair; faculty members are not required to accept this request. Students should ask an alternative faculty member to be Chair if their initial choice is unavailable. The Chair can, but need not, be the same as the student's Supervisory Chair.

The review must cover a broad, recognizable subfield (or the intersection of multiple subfields). Sections of the American Sociological Association (or a cognate professional organization) are a good starting point to identify subfields. Students can think of developing the scope of the subfield as roughly corresponding to the main topics included in an undergraduate course they would teach on the subfield of interest. For example, a student might complete a review article on topics such as: social networks and health; gender and work; or race/ethnicity in U.S. politics. These simply serve as examples; it is ultimately up to the Chair and student to identify the subfield of interest and to ensure that the review article covers an appropriate breadth of material.

It is important to note that, while the specific subfield and reading list is determined by the Chair and student, the review article must be broader than the intended dissertation topic. Students are expected to develop their own reading list appropriate for their subfield, but may draw on existing resources, such as course syllabi or reference lists from published articles. The review article should be substantively different from a student's MA thesis. Students are not permitted to directly use material from the MA thesis for the review article. Also, the review article should be substantively different from a student's dissertation proposal; as Chairs will confirm, efforts to copy material directly from the review article into a dissertation proposal is strongly discouraged. Finally, students are not permitted to plagiarize any material from other sources, including review articles from current or past graduate students.

Note that the review article is not designed to take an entire year to complete and is designed to be completed in 6 months (including the development of the reading list and writing the actual article). The hope is that the review article could be turned into a published paper (e.g., in *Sociology Compass*) but that is not a requirement of the exam.

*b. Subfields, Reading Lists, and Responsibilities*

The review article will be graded by a three-person committee, consisting of a Chair and two readers. Students must select a Chair for their comprehensive exam. This Chair could, but not need, be the same as the student's Supervisory Chair. The other two readers will be selected by the Graduate Chair, based on substantive expertise, as well as other factors (such as equitable division of labor among faculty). Faculty may be asked to grade exams as a general reader, even if they are not experts in the subfield of the review piece. Most likely, the grading committee will not be the same as the student's Supervisory Committee; it is instead designed to represent the faculty as a whole.

The Chair's responsibilities include helping the student select an appropriate subfield, developing the reading list that sets the scope for the review article, and giving minimal feedback on advanced drafts of the review article. The student must have the approval of the Chair on the selected subfield and scope of the review article. The student is ultimately responsible for all of the content, writing and ideas of the article, but the Chair is permitted to offer help and suggestions along the way. The Chair is not expected to offer line-by-line edits but can offer broad suggestions and advice for students to implement (both for content and writing). Students may also seek writing help from institutional resources, such as the UNL Writing Center, and may also seek writing help from graduate student peers. Individuals other than the student are not, however, allowed to directly contribute to (i.e., write) the review article. Note that readers are not expected to give feedback on the actual review article until the final examination and grading, though they may if contacted by the student.

The Comprehensive Exam Committee (the Chair and the two readers [selected by the Graduate Chair]) is responsible for approving the students' reading list and for grading the actual exam. The reading list should include approximately 75 articles, books, etc., although this will vary from exam to exam. It is the responsibility of the student to develop the reading list, with input from the Chair of the exam.

The Comprehensive Exam Committee members will receive the exam at the same time but may not consult with one another regarding their initial assessment. Within three weeks, the committee will meet and provide an assessment of the student's review article. They must also reach agreement on an overall evaluation of pass or fail. The Comprehensive Exam committee

will provide feedback to the students on their review article and an overall pass or fail assessment. This final assessment should be reported to the Graduate Chair within four weeks from receipt of the review article.

The students will receive a letter from the Graduate Chair reporting the results and providing the grader comment with CC's to the Supervisory Chair, Department Chair, and Comprehensive Exam Committee Chair. Copies of this letter, the graders' comments, and the examination will also be placed in the student's file.

Students are encouraged to discuss the comments and results with their Supervisory Chair. Students who receive a failing grade should take the comments of the committee into consideration and revise their review article, with the expectations that the revised review article would be graded in the next exam period (e.g., the following semester). Students are not expected to 'start over' in a new area, but should revise the original submission, given the comments of the Exam Committee. The grading committee can, but need not, be the same as in the original attempt. The Graduate Chair will begin the process of degree termination for any student failing to pass the comprehensive exam on the second attempt, in accordance with Graduate Studies [guidelines](#) and UNL policies.

### *c. Comprehensive Exam Procedures*

Comprehensive exams are graded twice an academic year in August and January. Students should expect to turn in the review article the Friday prior to the start of classes for the semester in question, although the exact date will be set by the Graduate Chair.

- i. Each student needs to notify the Graduate Chair in writing of their intention to take an exam by late-February for the August exam and late August for the Winter exam (exact dates will be set by the Graduate Chair). This entails submitting a brief (1-page) description of the intended review article and the name of the Chair of the student's Comprehensive Exam Committee to the Graduate Chair. The Chair of the student's Exam Committee must confirm with the Graduate Chair that the subfield has been approved. Students must then submit their reading list to the Graduate Chair. The due date for the reading list will fall around mid-April for the August exam and mid-October for the Winter exam. The reading list must then be approved by the Comprehensive Exam Committee within 3 weeks (early May/November). The Comprehensive Exam Committee can approve the list with no additional changes or ask for revisions to the submitted list (e.g., adding specific readings). If changes were requested, the student must send a final, updated reading list to the Graduate Chair by the end of the semester (i.e., by the end of the spring semester for the August exam). The updated list should incorporate all requested changes.
- ii. Students are strongly encouraged (but not required) to complete appropriate coursework prior to developing their subfield and reading list. Students are encouraged to take a minimum of two graduate-level courses in the substantive area of the review article prior to taking the exam.
- iii. Students are expected to take and submit the exam (i.e., turn in the review article for evaluation) during the cycle for which they have registered for it. Failure to do so is

counted as an automatic failure, unless it is due to special circumstances as determined by the Graduate Chair in consultation with the Graduate Committee. Requests for a waiver from an automatic failure must be submitted one month prior to the due date of the review, except in rare cases, as determined by the Graduate Chair.

- iv. Students must include proper citations for every article, book, etc. cited in the review article. This includes in-text citation and a reference list placed at the end of the article. The reference list must include all references used within the body of the review article. Any materials in the pre-approved reading list that were not used in the article should not be included. In contrast, sources used in the essay that were not included in the original, approved reading list should be properly cited.
- v. Students must also include a short response letter to the Exam Committee, describing major differences between the final list of work cited (see point iv.) and the reading list approved by the Exam Committee. It is expected that at least 80% of the readings in the preapproved list will be cited meaningfully in the review article. The response letter should include a list of all works in the approved reading list that were not cited in the review article, and a short description of why that set was not included.
- vi. The review article should be roughly 10000 words (30-40 pages double-spaced), not including the reference list, using 1-inch margins and 12-inch Times New Roman font.

*d. Procedures for Comprehensive Exam Grade Appeals*

If a student believes the comprehensive exam was not graded according to Graduate Program Guidelines procedures, or that the grade was inappropriate for some other reason, the student should meet with the Comprehensive Exam Committee to present their evidence and discuss the disagreement in detail. Both the Exam Committee and the student are obligated to try to resolve their differences. If the student is not satisfied with the final committee decision, he/she may appeal to the Graduate Chair. At any time in the process, a student can move to a Graduate College appeals process. This process would follow established Graduate Studies policies for appeal of grades (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/>).

## **G. Dissertation and Degree Requirements**

There are several forms/items that must be filed with Graduate Studies in succession and with set deadlines in order to graduate in a specific term (see Graduate Studies website for all forms, procedures, and exact deadlines). Students are responsible for checking and meeting the Graduate College's requirements and submission deadlines. An Application for Degree form must be submitted by the student at the beginning of the term in which they desire to graduate; however, it is the Supervisory Chair and Committee who determines whether or not a student is ready to graduate.

*a. Dissertation Proposal and Defense*

The student must submit a fully developed dissertation proposal. The proposal should contain a statement of purpose, a review of relevant literature, a theoretical construct to be tested where relevant, a discussion of the data or materials to be examined and a specific outline of the planned analysis. The student should be prepared to defend the proposal as a contribution to knowledge. No minimum or maximum length is required, but experience suggests that 15-30 pages is normally sufficient.

Copies of the student's dissertation proposal will be distributed to the members of the Supervisory Committee at such time as the Supervisory Chair decides the proposal is ready to be defended. The defense is to be held at the earliest convenience of the Supervisory Committee, but no later than four weeks (excluding Summer months) after the proposal is submitted to the committee for review.

The defense of the dissertation proposal is an oral examination during which the student must defend the theoretical perspective and methodology of the proposal and any other substantive questions related to the proposal raised by the Supervisory Committee. Immediately following the oral examination of the proposal, the committee shall reach one of the following conclusions:

- Pass, the student may begin work on the dissertation as proposed.
- Pass, the student may begin working on the dissertation following the completion of additional requirements (e.g., revision in the research design) determined by the supervisory committee.
- Unacceptable, but the student will be allowed to submit another proposal.
- Unacceptable, the student's program status will be reviewed by the Supervisory Committee in consultation with the Graduate Committee.

*b. Admission to Candidacy*

After all requirements set by the Supervisory Committee in connection with the oral defense of the dissertation proposal have been satisfied (and Comprehensive Exam passed), the Supervisory Committee will recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies that the student be admitted to Candidacy for the Ph.D. Degree. The Application for Candidacy form must be signed by all Supervisory Committee members and submitted to Graduate Studies. This will normally occur immediately after the student has passed the oral defense of the dissertation proposal. Once candidacy is achieved, students must register for a minimum of one-credit each semester (fall and spring) until the student graduates.

*c. Doctoral Dissertation and Oral Examination*

The dissertation is of no fixed length. It should advance or modify existing knowledge by treating new material, finding new results, drawing new conclusions, or interpreting old material in a new light. The final draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the Supervisory Chair and two readers (two other Sociology faculty members on the Supervisory Committee). These three supervisory committee members should be given at least three weeks to review the dissertation draft. If the Supervisory Chair and two readers assess that the student is ready to proceed with an oral defense, then they will sign the Application for Final Oral Examination form. The student must identify a suitable date and time for the oral defense that is agreed upon by all Supervisory Committee members. The Application for Final Oral Examination form must be filed before a student's desired graduation date (see Grad Studies website for deadlines).

The final oral examination is an integral part of the requirements for the Ph.D. All students must pass a final oral examination before being recommended for the degree. The examination consists of the defense of the dissertation and any other substantive questions relating to the field brought up by the Supervisory Committee. The scheduling of the final oral examination is announced in advance and all members of the department are invited to attend. Passing the Final Oral Examination is determined by a majority vote of the Supervisory Committee. Supervisory Committee members record their pass/fail assessment by signing the Completion of the Doctoral Degree form and Signature Page of the Dissertation. It is the student's responsibility to bring this paperwork to the oral defense (see Graduate Studies website). In the event of a tie vote, the Chair of the Department and the Graduate Chair appoints a committee of the members of the Department, none of whom shall be members of the Supervisory Committee. This Ad Hoc Committee makes the final decision on the student's completion of the degree requirements.

*d. Administrative Procedures for Submission of Dissertation*

Students are responsible for checking and meeting the Graduate College's requirements for submission of the dissertation. Graduate Studies will send students final instructions and a checklist after they submit an Application for Final Oral Examination. It is the student's responsibility to follow all these final instructions and meet all deadlines. A copy of the final dissertation should be given to the Department of Sociology office.

*e. Time Limits*

The time limit on granting the Ph.D. is eight years from the time of filing the student's Program of Studies in the Office of Graduate Studies. Extension may be requested from the Office of Graduate Studies. If all work for the Ph.D. is not completed within three years from the time of admission to Candidacy for the Ph.D. degree, the student will be required to retake the Comprehensive Examinations. All coursework expires after 10 years and would need to be retaken to count on the Program of Studies.

If a student has a break of two or more years in their graduate program (not continuously enrolled) prior to taking a comprehensive exam, they will default to the current graduate guidelines for curriculum requirements and comprehensive exam procedures.

## **VI. Graduate Student Reviews**

To provide students with an assessment of their overall performance in the Graduate Program, the Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Chair will conduct a formal review of graduate students in the spring semester of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the program. This comprehensive review will be repeated in the 4<sup>th</sup> year. Supervisory Committees, may at their discretion schedule additional comprehensive reviews in subsequent years. A letter from the Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Chair, summarizing the assessment of progress and accomplishments by the student's committee will be sent to the student, the Chair of the Graduate Committee, and a copy will be placed in the student's file.

In the spring semester of each year in the program, graduate students will complete the Graduate Student Progress Report. This form-based report summarizes the student's progress and activities from the prior year in the program (or from the first semester for first year students). It is completed using the standardized report form and requires a signature and funding recommendation from the student's Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Chair. For any students who do

not yet have a supervising faculty member (e.g. students in the first year of the program), the Graduate Chair will provide the approving signature.

The Graduate Committee will review the Graduate Student Progress Reports each spring semester. The Graduate Chair will prepare a letter for each student informing them of the assessment of their progress and funding recommendations for the coming academic year. This letter will be sent to the student, the Department Chair, Vice Chair, and the Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Chair. A copy of this letter will be placed in the student's file.

#### **A. Comprehensive Review File**

Students are required to create a Comprehensive Review File that summarizes their program progress and professional development. The first draft of the Comprehensive Review File should be reviewed by the student's Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Committee Chair. As determined necessary by their Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Committee Chair, a full meeting of the Supervisory Committee with the student will be held to provide feedback on the review file and discuss future goals. The annual evaluation letter prepared by the Thesis Advisor or Supervisory Chair will be based upon the contents of this review file and, if appropriate, the associated committee meeting. The Supervisory Committee will include ongoing assessments of the student's overall potential for completing the degree program.

#### **B. Evaluation Criteria and Program Status Decisions**

The Graduate Committee will meet and discuss the Graduate Student Progress Report for every student in the program to assess program progress and performance. If deemed necessary, the committee may request access to the full Review File prepared by the student for her or his Supervisory Committee. In reviewing the progress reports, the Graduate Committee will assess whether a student is making satisfactory program progress. Examples of unsatisfactory program progress or performance include, but are not limited to:

- consistently low or unacceptable (i.e., B- or lower) grades
- carrying one or more "Incompletes" for more than one semester
- specific to M.A. students (part-time students should adjust these guidelines accordingly):
  - failure to successfully complete core required classes in the first year of study
  - failure to identify a thesis by the end of the first spring semester
  - failure to file a Memorandum of Courses by the second year fall semester
  - taking longer than 2 years to complete their degree
- specific to Ph.D. students
  - failure to identify a dissertation topic after one year in the Ph.D. program
  - failure to establish a Supervisory Committee and file a Program of Studies before completing 45 credits (coursework and non-coursework)
  - failure to register for a comprehensive exam prior to completing 50 hours of coursework credits
  - failing a comprehensive exam
    - and not registering for another exam within the next two exam cycles
  - failure to defend a dissertation proposal before completing 75 credits (coursework and non-coursework)

- taking more than two years to complete the dissertation after passing the oral dissertation defense

Upon completion of the review, the Graduate Committee will reach one of the following decisions for the student's program status: a) permit the student to continue degree work, b) place the student on academic probation, c) allow the student to finish a terminal MA degree, but deny admission into or drop him or her from the PhD program, or d) terminate the student from the program without completing degree work. Students may appeal the Graduate Committee program status decision to the Graduate Chair. The appeal must be in writing within three weeks of receiving the review letter from the Graduate Committee. The appeal may only be based on an introduction of new information not originally considered by the Graduate Committee and/or a lack of due process. Following a meeting to hear the appeal, the decision of the Graduate Committee to uphold or change its earlier decision will be communicated to the student in writing within two weeks. Students may appeal a Graduate Committee's program termination decision to the Graduate Council within the Graduate Studies Office.

### **C. Funding Recommendations**

Based on the outcome of the student's review, the Graduate Committee will also make one of the following funding recommendations to the Department Chair and Vice Chair: a) recommend continued funding, b) probationary funding, c) wait list for funding, or d) discontinue funding. Funding will be recommended for students making satisfactory progress in the program. A recommendation for wait list funding will be made for students who have overdue incompletes and/or issues with completing program requirements on a timely basis. Discontinued funding will be recommended for students with unsatisfactory program progress/performance or who show low promise toward completing their degree program.

### **D. Academic Misconduct**

Students are expected to meet the highest standards of professional conduct in their academic work. As an academic community, we abide by many rules such as identifying information sources, accurately and fully describing the methods and results of our research, and protecting the rights of the participants in our studies. Moreover, students are responsible for knowing all of the violations of academic misconduct set forth in UNL's Student Code of Conduct. Examples of academic misconduct include intentionally representing others' work as one's own (plagiarism), the fabrication or falsification of data, cheating, and sexual harassment. Students who engage in academic misconduct will be terminated from the Sociology Graduate Program.

## **VII. FUNDING**

### **A. Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate assistantships are generally awarded by the Graduate Committee upon admission into the graduate program when entering as a full-time student. Graduate assistantships are offered for one year only. Students entering with a Bachelor's degree are typically funded for five years (two years for completing the Master's Degree and an additional 3 years to complete the PhD). Students entering with a Master's Degree in Sociology are funded for four years to complete the PhD. Additional years of funding may be awarded to students who show significant merit.

Likewise, unsatisfactory performance in your graduate program or in the performance of your assistantship duties is grounds for early termination or non-renewal of your assistantship.

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) are generally hired as part of a grant project supervised by a faculty member. GRA positions will be advertised to all graduate students in the department and are awarded on a competitive basis. Individual faculty members with the grant make these hiring decisions. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) are appointed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Department on an annual basis. Some GTAs assist faculty members in large courses, while others, who must hold the masters degree, often teach their own courses. Specific assignments are made in consultation with the Graduate Chair. The Department Chair has the ultimate responsibility for staffing the teaching program.

All GTA's who are instructor of record for a course must administer teaching evaluations in the class. The instructor must use the standard departmental items. Instructors may add supplemental questions, but must do so on a separate form. When the teaching evaluations are administered the instructor will not be present in the room and a student in the class will be selected to turn in the teaching evaluations to the Sociology Department office. The evaluations will be returned to the Instructor after the final grades are submitted and evaluations are processed.

*a. Satisfactory Performance in Assistantship Duties*

Graduate students whose duties include research assistance or other tasks are expected to meet high performance standards. Students who do not meet satisfactory standards may have their funding withdrawn. A GRAs performance quality is assessed by the supervising faculty member. GTAs are also expected to meet high standards of teaching quality. At the minimum, this involves meeting all assigned classes and careful preparation for classes. Teaching quality will be assessed through standard teaching evaluation instruments and inspection of syllabi and class material. Unprofessional and unethical conduct in the classroom is also grounds for dismissal from the program. Guidelines for the ethical practice of teaching are found in the UNL Professional Ethics Statement ([https://www.unl.edu/facultysenate/Ethics%20Statement%20\(1-5-2016\)%20Final%20Version.pdf](https://www.unl.edu/facultysenate/Ethics%20Statement%20(1-5-2016)%20Final%20Version.pdf)). Additional resources are the ASA Ethics Statement ([asanet.org](http://asanet.org)) and in *Teaching Norms and the ASA's Code of Ethics* (Bayer and Braxton, 2000, *ASA Footnotes*).

**B. Teaching Assistantships for International Students**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has established a minimum level of English language proficiency for all international graduate students with instructional assignments. It is not designed to eliminate all speaking accents, but to outline a reasonable and defensible method of ensuring that all of our International Graduate Teaching Assistants will possess effective verbal communication skills. An international student who had to submit evidence of English proficiency to the Sociology Department (i.e., TOEFL scores) as part of their application packet may be required to take an English Language Test (ELT) and/or enroll in the Institute for International Teaching Assistants.

The Sociology Department strongly encourages all incoming international students to attend the Institute for International Teaching Assistants as it provides valuable source of teaching information and it is a great way to meet other international students upon arrival in Lincoln. The institute entails a two-week intensive training program (starting in late July) focusing on instructional strategies, classroom management and active learning, English pronunciation and

intonation, and cross-cultural communication. The Graduate Chair will enroll all international students in this training program. International students who scored 28 or higher on the speaking section of the TOEFL can be waived from the institute's final oral exam. International students with scores lower than 28 must be certified as "ready to teach" by a panel consisting of a faculty member from the candidate's department, an ESL rater, a faculty person from an unrelated department, a faculty person with teaching expertise, and an undergraduate student. Candidates present a 10-minute lesson on a topic within sociology. Candidates who demonstrate spoken English proficiency and the ability to present their topic in a clear and organized fashion are judged ready for a teaching assignment. International students who fail to be certified or score below 85 on an ELT test will be required to take English as a Second Language coursework in their initial semester at UNL (i.e., ENGL 887). ENGL 887 is a 3 credit hour course to build English communication skills, with an emphasis on writing essays and research papers.

*i. Assistantship Registration Requirements*

Students with assistantships are encouraged to enroll for 9 credit hours in each fall and spring semester in which they hold the assistantship. Students must inform the Graduate Chair when falling below nine credit hours in the fall or spring semester. Funded PhD students who have completed the 90 hours of credit on their Program of Study should register for one credit a semester until the term of their graduation. PhD students registering for only one-credit may need to fill out a form to attain a Certification of Full-Time Graduate Status (see Graduate Studies website for guidelines for registration during doctoral candidacy), to keep student loans in deferment and prevent paying FICA and Medicare taxes. In registering for one-credit, your student fees will drop but you will have to pay to use the recreation center and the health center and have limited access to libraries. Your student health insurance will be unaffected by registering for one-credit.

*ii. Other Funding Sources*

Because outside funding strengthens the Graduate Program, students are strongly encouraged to seek-out alternative funding. Funding is available from external government agencies, like NSF, and within the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Office of Graduate Studies (see websites for more information). The Sociology Department is fortunate to be closely connected to the Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR). The BOSR provides data collection assistance to academic faculty and graduate student researchers, state agencies, and other not-for-profit groups. The services include telephone surveys, mail surveys, Web surveys, focus group facilitation, personal interviewing, data coding, data entry, transcription, evaluation, report writing and other data collection techniques as needed by our clientele. BOSR sometimes hires graduate students over the summer to assist with providing these services. Students will also have opportunities to teach their own classes over the summer. When funds are available, the department will subsidize graduate student travel to professional meetings. The priority for the monies goes to students presenting papers at national or regional meetings. Students must complete a travel fund request before their intended participation.

The Department also provides support to students over and above their assistantship stipend through a set of awards, fellowships, and travel funds supported by the generosity of financial donors and available department funds. Below is a list of types of awards that are available

annually for sociology graduate students who demonstrate evidence of (or potential for) outstanding scholarship in research and/or teaching:

- Summer Research Support provides financial support directly to the student so she or he can focus on research (i.e. working on a thesis or dissertation, developing a paper for publication, or gain work related research experience).
- Awards provide financial support for specific research–related expenditures, such as data collection labor (e.g., coders) and materials (e.g., mailings, incentives), books, software, or other materials necessary for research.
- Travel Support to defray expenses incurred by graduate students traveling to scholarly, scientific, or professional conferences to present papers, posters, or other scholarly material, to engage in job market activities, to network with colleagues/collaborators; those traveling for data collection; or those traveling to research- or teaching-related training workshops.
- Awards for Excellence to recognize high quality empirical research papers written by graduate students and high quality work in teaching, instructional development, and working with undergraduate students.
- The J. J. and Eleanor S. Ogle Dissertation Fellowship, a non-service fellowship (i.e., one that does not require TA or RA work) that supports students in their final year of graduate study to complete their dissertation research.

## **VIII. ADMISSIONS**

Prospective graduate students should begin the online application process by visiting the website for the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **A. Application Requirements**

Applicants will need to fill out the online application and provide electronic copies of:

- Official transcript of all college work (an unofficial transcript may be temporarily submitted)
- A statement of purpose explaining why you want to attend graduate school in Sociology, the research you hope to pursue, and an idea of which faculty you might work with.
- Three (3) letters of recommendation
- A sample of the student’s written work
- International students for whom English is not their first language must also submit scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). We will only consider students who score at least 550 on the paper-based TOEFL (we prefer above 600 and a minimum of 50 for the writing section) or at least 81 on the internet-based TOEFL (we prefer above 100 with a minimum of 20 for the writing section).

Students should submit their completed applications by early January for admission in the following fall semester. Mid-year admissions will be considered only under unusual circumstances.

## **B. Program Deficiencies**

Students are generally admitted on a full-standing basis, but in certain instances provisional status may be granted to students who show potential for graduate work but have deficiencies in previous coursework with an M.A. or in other admission criteria. In the case of admission with provisional status, the Graduate Committee will specify deficiencies that must be removed within a given time before the student is admitted to full standing. In particular, the Sociology Department expects all incoming graduate students, including those entering with a M.A. degree from another institution, to possess expertise in an undergraduate course in statistics. Students entering without adequate preparation should remove this deficiency as soon as possible. This can be accomplished by completing the requirements for Sociology 206 (SOCI 206: Introduction to Social Research II). Ideally, this course is taken the summer prior to admission to the program. If necessary, a student may take this class in the fall of their first semester. In this instance, three hours of course credit in SOCI 996 may be counted as part of the expected 9-hour course load for a funded student, but cannot be counted toward the hours required for either the M.A. or the Ph.D. degree.

## **IX. Graduate Student Organization, Participation and Rights**

### **A. Nebraska Association of Sociology Graduate Students**

The Nebraska Association of Sociology Graduate Students (NASGS) is an organization consisting of all persons holding graduate standing in the Department of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Its purpose is to serve, protect, and further the interests of its members and to act as a forum for discussing graduate student affairs, including university and departmental policies pertaining to graduate students. Officers of the organization are selected annually by majority vote of the members. The President presides over all meetings of the organization, is responsible for communication between the departmental faculty and the membership and serves, along with the Vice-President, as the organization's official representative to faculty meetings (with the exception of personnel sessions; meetings of the Department faculty are open to all students in the Sociology Graduate Program). The remaining officers of the organization include a Secretary/Treasurer, a representative to the Graduate Committee, and representatives to Departmental Search and Resources and Planning Committees.

### **B. Graduate Student Participation in Choosing New Faculty**

To assure graduate student participation in choosing additions to the Department Faculty, the following procedure has been adopted. One graduate student selected by the Department Chair will have full and equal participation in the Faculty Search Committee for prospective applicants. The students will select a three-person committee, one of the three being a member of the Search Committee, which will have complete access to the files on those applicants selected by the Search Committee for consideration. This committee will examine the files and give its report to NASGS. NASGS will then rank or rate those applicants, using the same procedure employed by individual faculty members. One student from this committee will be selected by NASGS to be the graduate student representative in those faculty meetings in which prospective candidates are to be considered. The student representative will have the right to vote only on matters directly related to the choice of specific candidates.

After a candidate has been invited to visit, students will have the opportunity to meet with him/her and they will have the opportunity to attend any formal presentation made by the candidate. The graduate students will meet collectively after having met with the candidate. At this time, they will reach a decision of whether they would like the faculty to offer a position to the candidate. The graduate student representative will attend the faculty meeting in which a final decision will be made as to whether to offer a position to the candidate. The student will have one vote and will be bound by the rule of confidentiality. The quorum rule for faculty decision-making will be based on faculty only. The graduate student representative will not be counted. The three-fourth voting rule of the faculty will include the student representative, but rounding will be down.

### **C. Bill of Rights for Graduate Students in Sociology**

#### *a. Equal Education Opportunity*

Students have a right to equal educational opportunity and protection against discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, political ideology, and political activity.

- The Department must provide graduate students fair treatment, free of bias and harassment, in all learning endeavors within the Department, including course assignments, course grades, research activities, access to financial aid, and recommendations for employment.
- The Department must strive to create the conditions and an atmosphere of nondiscrimination in which graduate students feel secure against retaliation because of political, ideological, or theoretical beliefs and practices.
- In general, academic merit should guide departmental allocations of financial assistance and recommendations for employment; however, we emphatically support affirmative action programs and other federal regulations which attempt to repair the long-term structure of sexism and institutional racism.

#### *b. Participation in Departmental Governance*

Students have a right to participate in decisions which affect the conditions and quality of their academic life. This requires meaningful representation in departmental governance.

- Graduate students shall be represented on department committees, especially those that deal with the curriculum, grievance, graduate student requirements, and faculty recruitment. It is desirable that departmental meetings be open to graduate students.
- The Department shall provide means for graduate student representation in departmental proceedings. Graduate student representation shall be at least one-third that of voting faculty on the Graduate Committee (except during personnel sessions).

#### *c. Educational Records*

Students have a right to the privacy and confidentiality of their educational records.

- Graduate student files and all other written information about graduate students in the Department must be treated with confidentiality. The Department should provide security over access to these materials.

- The Department must make provisions for graduate students to see their personal files in accordance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

*d. The Graduate Studies Program*

Students have a right to full disclosure of information about their standing in graduate studies, financial assistance, and prospects for employment when the M.A. or Ph.D. degree is completed.

- The Department shall provide new and continuing graduate students with information about the general financial aid picture and the prospects for continuation of funding. Statistics on the number and types of financial aid allocations in the department for the prior year will be distributed to graduate students.
- The Department shall adopt policy statements for the allocation of financial aid and these policy statements shall be communicated to new and continuing students. Statements shall explain how to apply for financial aid, the criteria used for granting aid, the deadlines for applications and decisions, the "good standing" criteria used for continuation of funding, the priorities used for distribution among new and continuing students, and the standards that will be applied in the event of curtailment of funds.
- Scholarships and assistantships for teaching or for research shall carry statements which specify in clear language the period of coverage, the dollar amount, how funds will be paid, the duties of assistants (including the weekly hours of work), and the specific responsibilities to be carried out. Any benefits included in the assistance package should be noted (tax status, tuition remission, medical coverage, and such).
- It is commonly understood that every faculty member will actively work to place his/her advisees. In addition, departments shall provide graduate students with adequate information about the job market and job opportunities.
- The Department shall provide graduate students, in writing, with timely notice of their standing in graduate study and of their performance in work, courses, and examinations. Inadequate performance, such as low grades, incompletes, poor work performance, and poor or failing results on examinations, shall be mentioned and constructive support shall be provided soon after their occurrence. Students shall be informed how such performance will affect their standing in the program, especially the continuation of financial assistance and what they must do to correct inadequacies.

*e. Research Performance*

Students have a right to fair and equitable treatment for work performed on faculty-sponsored research projects.

- Students shall be given full credit for work and ideas they bring to faculty-sponsored research projects. Faculty must not represent the work of students as their own.
- Faculty shall reach a clear understanding with graduate students regarding their responsibilities and rights on research projects. There should be open and honest communication about the tasks graduate students are expected to perform, when students shall have access to data for theses and dissertations, and the conditions under which they shall receive joint or sole authorship on publications that emerge from the research.

*f. Complaints and Grievances*

Students have a right to file complaints against the department or members thereof and to petition for redress of grievances.

- The Department shall provide for procedures by which graduate students can lodge complaints and obtain redress of grievances. Preferably such regulations should be located in the Department office. Graduate students shall be informed of how to invoke the complaint-filing process consistent with Department and University rules and regulations as well as state laws.
- When a graduate student presents reasonable evidence of misconduct (e.g., sexual harassment) by a faculty member, as defined under the section on academic responsibility of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Arts & Sciences Faculty Handbook, the Department shall provide a way by which the student can avoid working directly with said faculty member during the period of investigation.
- It is desirable that there be an appeals procedure beyond the Department by which graduate students can seek rehearing of their grievances. Where such procedures exist, they should be communicated to students.
- A graduate student can file a grievance with the appropriate regional association or with the American Sociological Association's Committee on Freedom of Research and Teaching. If one of these committees acts on the complaint(s), ultimately it will be necessary to contact the Department Chair and the faculty member(s) concerned in order to investigate the complaint. Efforts will be made to resolve the dispute and protect the student's position within the Department. In addition, efforts will be made to play a conciliatory and mediational role by the body taking the matter under its purview.

*g. Student Academic Misconduct*

The Department of Sociology views academic misconduct by its graduate students as a serious breach of professional ethics with implications for the student's continuation in the Department and their future career in the discipline. It is also recognized that graduate students charged with academic misconduct have a right to due process that must be guaranteed by departmental procedures. Therefore, the following policy will guide the actions of professors and graduate students involved in cases of alleged or proven academic misconduct.

When a faculty member suspects academic misconduct, defined according to the Student Code of Conduct of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Graduate Guidelines of the Department of Sociology or a course syllabus, by a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, he/she will inform the student of this fact in writing and request that the student arrange a meeting to discuss the issue(s) within two weeks (not counting summer and semester breaks and university holidays). Both the professor and the graduate student may consult with other persons (e.g., the Graduate Chair, the Department Chair). Professors and graduate students are advised that their rights and responsibilities in matters concerning academic misconduct are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, the Graduate Guidelines of the Department of Sociology, the Regents Bylaws, or other documents.

At the meeting, the professor will first outline the evidence supporting a suspicion of academic misconduct and the graduate student will then have the opportunity to reply to the charge(s) and

challenge the evidence. If the student admits to academic misconduct at the meeting or within a reasonable length of time (not to exceed two weeks) thereafter, the professor will place a letter detailing the case in the student's departmental file. Copies of the letter will be mailed to the Student Judicial Affairs Office and the student's departmental address. The student will write a letter concerning the case and copies of this letter will be placed in the student's file and mailed to the professor. In addition to any penalties levied by the professor (e.g., a failing grade in the course) and/or by the Student Judicial Affairs Office, the Graduate Committee, upon request of the professor, will review the case and may impose additional penalties, including suspension or termination from the Graduate Program. The Graduate Committee will consider whether the graduate student has previously been guilty of cases of academic misconduct, the seriousness of the offense (e.g., failing to provide proper citation to sources, claiming a paper purchased from an individual or business as one's own work, fabricating research results), the nature of the work (e.g., a course paper, a comprehensive exam, a thesis or dissertation) and other factors in reaching its decision. The Graduate Committee will review written materials concerning the case and may ask the professor and/or student to appear at the meeting to answer questions. Students may appeal penalties invoked by the Graduate Committee to the UNL Graduate Council.

If the graduate student fails to contact the professor to arrange a meeting within two weeks or denies that he/she is guilty of academic misconduct, the professor may file charges with the Student Judicial Affairs Office. Copies of the letter stating the charge(s) and supporting evidence will be provided to the student. The Student Judicial Affairs Office will investigate the charge(s) and determine the student's guilt or innocence according to institutional standards and procedures as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. If the student is found guilty of academic misconduct, the professor will place a letter detailing the case in the student's departmental file. A copy of the letter will be mailed to the student's departmental address. The student will write a letter concerning the case and copies of the letter will be placed in the student's file and mailed to the professor. Decisions of the Student Judicial Affairs Office are not subject to review or appeal within the Department of Sociology. When a student is found guilty of academic misconduct by the Student Judicial Affairs Office, the case will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee, upon request of the professor, as described in the preceding paragraph. Both faculty members and graduate students are reminded that the process described in the above paragraphs is confidential until cases are resolved.

If a graduate student is employed as a graduate teaching or research assistant through the Department of Sociology at the time of suspension or expulsion from the Graduate Program for academic misconduct, he/she will be allowed to complete the duties of the employment contract through the end of the current semester or summer session. However, the student will be ineligible to receive any financial support previously awarded or committed by the Department for a future semester or summer session until the end of the suspension or expulsion. At this point, students may be considered for funding along with new students and current students without commitments for funding. A graduate student expelled for academic misconduct may not be considered for readmission to the Graduate Program of the Department of Sociology for five academic years from the time of their expulsion.

#### *h. Protocol*

- This document is the basic document setting forth the rights and expectations of all graduate students of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

- The document approved at the 1980 National Conference of Graduate Students shall be the operative document to guide all complaints and petitions for redress of grievances directed to the ASA or the regional societies.

#### **D. Grade Appeals Process**

The departmental grade appeals process reflects guidelines provided by the Office of Graduate Studies. Legitimate grounds for a grade appeal exist “for students who believe that evaluation of their academic progress has been prejudiced or capricious.” (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/registration/grades/>; UNL Graduate Council; March 9, 1993; amended August 16, 2018).

Please direct questions about the process outlined below and submit documents related to a formal appeal to the Graduate Chair in Sociology.

1. Ad Hoc Grade Appeals Committee: The Graduate Chair will convene an ad hoc Grade Appeals committee of three members from the Graduate Committee and one graduate student representative to consider grading-related complaints by graduate students. In the case of a conflict of interest, members for the ad hoc committee will be selected from the graduate faculty by the Graduate Chair.
  - a. The ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee of the Department of Sociology has been established in accordance with the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, Chapter V, Section 5.3 (effective August 20, 1973).
  - b. Scope of Inquiry: The ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee is charged with protecting graduate students from improper evaluation of their academic performance. The Committee will not undertake to resolve disputes about a student's knowledge of a particular subject matter. Its responsibility, rather, is to ensure due process in grading procedures through an examination of evidence and consultation with both parties. If the committee agrees to hear a formal grade appeal it means there is reason to suspect that the student's due process rights were denied in the grading process. Denial of due process may be argued under the following conditions.
    - 1) Instructor used capricious or prejudicial standards to evaluate the student's performance.
    - 2) Instructor failed to inform the student of the course-specific requirements, standards, objectives, and evaluation procedures at the beginning of the semester or prior to the assessment at issue in the grade appeal.
2. Grade Appeals Process. A graduate student wishing to appeal a grade can request a hearing before the ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee of the Department of Sociology.

- a. Before initiating the formal grade appeals process, students are required to seek a prompt resolution by contacting the instructor within 30 days of the posting of the grade report by the Office of the University Registrar.
- b. Students who are dissatisfied with the decision of the instructor should seek to resolve the matter with the department chair within the first four weeks of the semester.
- c. If unsuccessful, the student may then initiate the formal grade appeals process by submitting to the Graduate Chair a written statement of the grounds for appeal. This appeal must be filed within 60 days of the posting of the grade report by the Office of the University Registrar. The student's statement should provide detailed information as outlined below. The student's statement should be as specific as possible with respect to the evidence introduced, giving dates, places, and times where feasible. The statement needs to provide evidence that the student unsuccessfully attempted to resolve the case in consultation with the instructor prior to initiating the formal grade appeals process. The statement should not be a vehicle for unsubstantiated charges and will be key to the decision-making process of the Grade Appeals Committee.
- d. Upon receiving the student's written statement and request to appeal a grade, the Graduate Chair will convene an ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee. In case the Graduate Chair has a conflict of interest, the Department Chair will designate an ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee Chair from the Graduate Committee, who will convene the committee and move forward. The Graduate Chair (or functional equivalent as outlined above) will forward the student's statement to the Grade Appeals Committee and to the instructor involved.
- e. The Graduate Chair (or functional equivalent as outlined above) will request from the instructor all available documentary evidence (exams, term papers, grade books, etc.), which will be forwarded to the Grade Appeals Committee.
- f. Prior to reviewing the case, the Grade Appeals Committee may also request verbal or written clarification from either the student or the instructor. Upon examination of the case, the Grade Appeals Committee may take any of the following actions:
- 1) It may reject the case. In that case, the committee's decision letter will provide a rationale for rejecting the case.
  - 2) It may refer the case back to the instructor, with the request to resolve the matter. In that case, the committee's decision letter will provide suggestions to the instructor on potential solutions, if possible.
  - 3) It may agree to adjudicate the case. In that case, it will hold sequential, separate meetings with each party, and additional parties whose testimony is deemed relevant. Prior to the meeting, the ad hoc committee may request additional information from either the faculty person and/or the student. If the Committee finds that the student received an inappropriate

grade, they will recommend that the faculty member adjust the student's grade accordingly and deliver this decision in a letter to the Graduate Chair who will then pass the letter on to the student and instructor.

3. Appeal. If the matter is unduly delayed or not resolved, the student may present the original appeal documentation to the Dean of Graduate Education who shall request a review by a subcommittee of the Graduate Council. A final appeal may be made to the full Graduate Council, if it agrees to hear the case. Since awarding grades in courses occurs at the individual campus level, the decision of the Graduate Council shall be final and is not subject to further appeal beyond the campus.

4. The timeline of the appeals process is determined by the Graduate College guidelines as outlined here: <https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/registration/grades/>. In case of a discrepancy between departmental practices and the Graduate College guidelines, the latter supersedes departmental practices.

5. If the instructor's grade is overturned, the instructor of record has the right of appeal, in writing, at the same successive levels of review.