

# Sociology, PhD

## Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and file an Intent to Graduate. For a general layout of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

## Overview

The PhD program is a six-year degree program. Although students will normally earn a master's degree on the way to the PhD, we do not offer a standalone master's degree program. All required course work is meant to be completed within the first three years, although students may continue to take elective courses after the third year, especially if they pursue a graduate certificate in an adjacent field. The program is designed in an integrated and streamlined way so that students have ample opportunity to develop research on their own and with faculty and peers. Alongside required course work and milestones, graduate students will be expected to participate in professional socialization activities including departmental colloquiums, departmental workshops, and departmental mini-conferences, among other opportunities.

## Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required: 42 (Note:** Remission applies for a maximum of 72 graduate-level units.)
- **Degree Length: 6 years**
  - Students are expected to complete all milestones and course work (detailed below) within six years.
  - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their course work, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
  - Sociology assures funding for up to 12 semesters for full-time students in good academic standing. Summer course work will not be covered without prior approval from the Department and the Office of Graduate Studies.

## Dissertation

The PhD dissertation should be an integrated, coherent, and original work. It may be modeled on a book manuscript that builds from an introduction and description of the research to a series of empirical chapters. Alternatively, it may take a "three-paper" format, in which each chapter takes the form of a paper that could be submitted for publication on its own. According to the degree requirements of the

Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, the dissertation must be defended before a committee of five faculty members, including at least three faculty members from this department and one person from another department or university.

## Required Courses

Students must earn at least a B- in each core course listed below in order to count toward program credit. Additionally, students must maintain a *minimum* GPA of 3.3 across all required Sociology courses, as well as a *minimum* cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 across all courses taken.

- Mentored Research Experience (3 semesters, 1 unit each)
  - During their first three semesters, students will engage in a required collaborative research project with an assigned faculty mentor. These research collaborations will integrate students into a faculty member's research as to strengthen students' research and analytical skills. Students will work closely with their faculty mentor - ideally to produce a jointly-authored publication early in the student's program of study and ensure a strong foundation for the student's own research agenda. These collaborations will often continue informally past the third semester.
- Central Questions and Approaches in Sociology (2 units)
- Professional Development (1 unit)
- Sociological Theory (3 units)
- Quantitative Methods I and II (two-semester sequence, 3 units each)
- Qualitative Methods (3 units)
- Mentored Teaching/Professional Experience (3 semesters, 0 credits each)
  - Students participate in a Mentored Experience for at least three semesters. At least two of those Mentored Experiences will be Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs), and one may be a Mentored Professional Experience (MPE). Most students will engage in a Mentored Teaching Experience for three semesters. Students who wish to teach independently at Washington University must complete all three Mentored Teaching Experiences; those who do not will not be eligible for teaching assignments.
- Research Design (3 units)
- Professional Writing (3 units)
- 15 credits of elective course work (typically, 5 courses of 3 units each)
  - Other substantive or methods courses in sociology will be offered that reflect our faculty's research and methodological areas of expertise. With departmental approval, advanced methods courses and courses pertaining directly to the student's research interests may be taken in other departments and count toward degree requirements. Course work that has not been approved for elective use by the Graduate Committee will not count toward program requirements, but may fulfill other certificate or Arts & Sciences requisites.

- Sociology Master's Thesis (3 units)
  - The master's thesis/empirical paper is an important milestone and a major publication opportunity. No later than midway through the second year, students will assemble a committee of three faculty members who will detailed collective feedback on their research. By the end of the summer after their second year, students will complete a draft of their thesis/paper and submit it to their advisor for feedback. By the end of the fifth semester, students will have polished their thesis/paper in the professional writing seminar, defended it before their faculty committee, and submitted the research for publication.
- Qualifying Exam Paper: Areas I and II (1 unit each)
  - After completing the required course work and the master's thesis/empirical paper, students will write one qualifying exam paper that demonstrates their expertise in two particular subfields of the discipline. Students will develop *two* reading lists formed in collaboration with faculty that contains central contributions to the Department's major areas of study, such as race and ethnicity, gender and family, immigration, political sociology and social movements, work and organizations, policing and criminal justice, and community and urban sociology. Students will be encouraged to add supplemental readings that pertain to their specific emerging research interests.
  - After reading the material on the two lists, students will write an integrative paper that identifies important areas of overlap or divergence in the two sociological subfields, that applies insights from one subfield to another, or that otherwise reviews the existing research in a novel way. This process should produce a paper with original insights and potentially be suitable for publication in one of several journals that explicitly welcomes agenda-setting or review articles. This paper will typically be completed by the end of the third year.
- Dissertation Proposal (1 unit)
  - After completing the qualifying exam paper, students should write a dissertation proposal that describes the motivation and plan for their research. They will receive feedback on drafts of the proposal from a committee they have assembled that consists of at least three faculty members. A final dissertation proposal must be defended before the committee no later than the second semester of the fourth year.

## Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary*, *qualifying*, *general*, *comprehensive*, or *major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

## Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree milestone that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in LGS 6XXX Mentored Teaching Experience or LGS 7020 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.

## The Doctoral Dissertation

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) must be created no later than the end of the student's third year; departments may set shorter timelines (e.g., by the end of the student's second year) for this requirement. As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation that is approved by their RAC.

A Title, Scope & Procedure Form for the dissertation must be signed by the committee members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, at least 6 months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before beginning the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide & Template that give instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Both should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requires each student to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least 1 week before the defense. Most degree programs require 2 or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

## The Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the RAC is necessary before the student can orally defend their dissertation. The Dissertation Defense Committee that observes and examines the student's defense consists of at least five members, who normally meet these two, independent criteria:

1. Four of the five must be tenured or tenure-track Washington University faculty; one of these four may be a member of the emeritus faculty. The fifth member must have a doctoral degree and an active research program, whether at Washington University, at another university, in government, or in industry.
2. Three of the five normally come from the student's degree program; at least one of the five must not.

All committees must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, regardless of whether they meet the normal criteria.

The committee is appointed by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, upon the request of the degree program. The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense. Faculty and graduate students who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee members. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student's field of expertise.

## Submission of the Dissertation

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest's ETD Administrator. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

## Master's Degree Along the Way/ In Lieu of a PhD

Students who wish to earn a master's degree as a part of their broader doctoral study may do so by completing all relevant course work and milestones. Please reference the most recent version of the posted Sociology Graduate Handbook for details. The Washington University Department of Sociology does not offer a standalone master's degree.

Contact: Kaitlyne A. Motl, PhD  
Phone: 314-935-5790  
Email: [kaitlyne.motl@wustl.edu](mailto:kaitlyne.motl@wustl.edu)  
Website: <http://sociology.wustl.edu>