

**MCMASTER UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**  
**GRADUATE HANDBOOK**

**2017-2018**

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## **FOREWORD**

Your programme as a sociology graduate student is affected by expectations from three main sources: School of Graduate Studies; Department of Sociology; and your particular supervisor and supervisory committee.

This Graduate Handbook is presented as a working guide to graduate students and their supervisors.

For general university rules and procedures, refer to the current School of Graduate Studies Calendar. Students should be familiar with the regulations therein and note that they take precedence over all departmental regulations.

Regulations contained in this handbook are always subject to revision. Students are responsible for fulfilling those requirements in effect at the time they entered the programme of study for any degree. If changes occur, students can sometimes opt to follow the new regulations. It is the student's responsibility to keep informed of changes. Students should consult the departmental Graduate Advisor if there are any questions concerning these regulations or changes in them.

The most up-to-date regulations in the graduate programme, and this handbook, may be found on the Department of Sociology website (see address below). The website also provides information on graduate courses, faculty research activities, and e-mail addresses for faculty, graduate students and staff. No hard copy of this information is available, since it is updated on a regular basis.

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# 1. OBJECTIVES

Graduate education in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University is geared to the intellectual development of sociologists, at both the M.A. and the Ph.D. levels. We have the highest standards, in line with national and international norms for excellence in sociology.

The Sociology Department's areas of strength are subfields of sociology in which we have particular clusters of faculty expertise. The current areas of strength for the department are:

- Gender, Sexuality, Family
- Politics, Social Movements and Policy
- Race, Ethnicity and Immigration
- Social Inequality
- Social Psychology
- Work and Occupations

Individual faculty members also have expertise in a broad range of research areas. Please feel free to stop by faculty members' office hours to learn more about their research.

# 2. SUPERVISOR AND SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

## A. Faculty Advisor/Supervisor

Prior to their arrival at McMaster, new students are assigned a faculty advisor for one term for M.A. and two terms for Ph.D. students. At the end of these periods, the advisor becomes the permanent supervisor unless the student or advisor initiates a request for a change. The assignment of advisors is initially made on the basis of compatibility of interests between student and faculty member, taking into account the supervisory load and availability of particular faculty members. Students can change supervisors (see section 2C) but they should settle on a permanent supervisor and thesis topic early in the programme. The faculty advisor/supervisor will assist the student in planning his/her programme of study and ensure that the student is progressing at a satisfactory pace.

The department has a number of associate members. Associate members can act as advisors and supervisors for M.A. students, and, on occasion, subject to Chair's approval, for Ph.D. students. Associate members can serve as members of both M.A. and Ph.D. supervisory committees as well as comprehensive examining committees.

Advisors/supervisors play a very important role in helping to develop a graduate student's programme of study. They consult with the student in setting up the programme of study and, at the same time, ensure that standards of excellence are met. They also guide students in their completion of M.A. and Ph.D. theses. At the regularly scheduled evaluation periods, the supervisor and supervisory committee are responsible for evaluating the student's performance and making recommendations to the Department and to the School of Graduate Studies regarding the student's status. These evaluations are made relative to the progress milestones laid out in this document.

The student-advisor/supervisor relationship rests on mutual respect and trust. The student should be able to talk freely with the advisor/supervisor about all aspects of the graduate programme. To a large extent, the advisor/supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the student moves through the various stages of the graduate programme in a timely fashion, obtaining the best possible qualifications and meeting the programme's goals. The student has a responsibility to consult with the advisor/supervisor on a regular basis about all aspects of the programme of study and research.

Specifically:

1. Students consult with the faculty advisor/supervisor about the courses to be taken in order to satisfactorily complete the programme. **Students should be aware that the Graduate Committee could require a student to complete more than the minimum number of courses required if it believes that the student lacks expertise** in areas that are particularly **important** to his/her training as a sociologist.
2. Students consult with the supervisor about the topics for the M.A. major research paper and thesis and Ph.D. dissertation. Students should develop their thesis/dissertation proposal in consultation with their supervisors and members of their supervisory committee. The proposal must be approved by the supervisory committee before the student pursues the research programme. In the case of the M.A. thesis and MRP, the proposal must be formally completed and approved by the end of the first term; in the Ph.D. programme, the deadline is the end of the sixth term (typically the end of the summer of the second year).
3. Students should consult with their supervisor about the selection of other members of the supervisory committee. The committee must be set up in the case of those following the M.A. thesis route by October 15 of the first term, and in the Ph.D. programme by the end of the second term. In agreeing to be on a supervisory committee, faculty members commit to making themselves available for committee meetings and to provide guidance informally to students when necessary.
4. Students consult with the supervisor over the choice of areas in which Ph.D. comprehensive examinations will be taken. These areas are chosen primarily on the

basis of the student's interests, and with an eye to gaining a solid grounding in the subject area in which research will be undertaken for the Ph.D. dissertation.

5. Students consult with the supervisor concerning any change in status that may be desired. This includes requests for transfer to part-time status, leaves of absence, off-campus status while undertaking field research, or for extension of the time normally permitted by the School of Graduate Studies for the completion of degree requirements.

Students consult with the supervisor regularly while conducting their M.A. MRP, thesis or Ph.D. dissertation research. The supervisor, in consultation with the student's supervisory committee, approves all data collection instruments (e.g. questionnaires, interview guides, etc.) before these are used by students. **Following approval by the supervisor, in cases where the research involves human participants, an application (protocol) must be submitted to the McMaster Research Ethics Board.** Applications must be signed by the supervisor. The Ethics Committee takes several weeks to process applications.

6. Students consult with the supervisor regularly while writing the M.A. thesis or Ph.D. dissertation. The supervisor (and usually the supervisory committee) must also approve each chapter or section of the student's thesis or dissertation as these are being written. Students will not be allowed to proceed to the oral defence of the thesis or dissertation unless it has been approved by the supervisory committee.

7. Students should consult with the supervisor about any problem being encountered in the programme, including any administrative or bureaucratic difficulties that may arise.

8. Students should contact their faculty advisors to work out their courses and programme of study as soon as they arrive on campus.

**IMPORTANT: The Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Programme must be advised of all decisions that are made *vis-à-vis* the student's programme.**

## **B. Supervisory Committee**

The supervisory committee functions in conjunction with the supervisor as an advisory and examining body for each student's work. The committee should be established as soon as possible after the student enters the programme and has worked out a potential topic for research with the supervisor. **The supervisory committee must be in place no later than October 15 for those following the M.A. thesis route, and the end of the second term for those in the doctoral programme.**

At the M.A. level a supervisory committee consists of at least three members of the faculty in the Department of Sociology. If the student is working in an area in which there is limited expertise within the department, permission can be obtained to include someone from another department within the university.

At the Ph.D. level the supervisory committee consists of at least three members, at least **two of whom must be in the Department of Sociology**. On very rare occasions, a member of the committee can be from another university within driving distance, but this requires a formal application by the supervisor to the School of Graduate Studies; the application must demonstrate that a person of comparable expertise cannot be found at McMaster and that such a person is critical for the successful completion of the thesis or dissertation. This person must be available to attend regular supervisory committee meetings.

The School of Graduate Studies requires that each student meet with her/his supervisory committee at least once every academic year; however, typically such meetings between students and their committees are more frequent. At least once every academic year, normally in the Fall, after the meeting the committee is required to submit a report to the School of Graduate Studies in which each member indicates his/her assessment of the student's progress and approval of the programme of study and research set out for the following year. In that way the School of Graduate Studies maintains a record of the student's progress through the programme, and can determine whether or not the student is fulfilling the expectations of the supervisory committee as set down at previous meetings.

The faculty of the Department meet to review each student's progress twice each year, usually in November and May. At these meetings the members of the supervisory committee are frequently called upon to comment on the progress of the students they supervise.

The supervisory committee, on the appointment of the Dean of Graduate Studies, acts as the oral examining committee for the M.A. thesis defence. Likewise, for the Ph.D. dissertation, members of the supervisory committee can be appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies to sit on the final oral examining committee (for more information see "Guide for the Preparation of Thesis", available from Graduate Studies).

### **C. Procedures for Appointing and Changing Advisors/Supervisors**

All assignments of a faculty advisor for incoming students will be made by the faculty members of the department's Graduate Committee. The faculty advisor normally becomes the permanent supervisor by the end of the first term in the M.A. programme and by the end of the second term in the Ph.D. programme unless a request for a change is made by either the student or advisor. Such a request will be

viewed as a normal part of the process of student/faculty sorting out of interests and relationships early in the programme. Changes often occur when students develop clearer ideas of their thesis and dissertation topics. Students are encouraged to meet and work with a wide variety of faculty members and to participate in the process of selecting an appropriate supervisor.

Any student wishing to change supervisors must fill out a form available from the Administrative Assistant and submit the request to the Graduate Committee. The Graduate Committee also requires that the change request form include the written opinions of both "old" and "new" supervisors about the proposed change.

### **3. COURSEWORK AND GRADING SYSTEM USED AT McMASTER**

#### **A. Course Categories**

There are three types of courses for which a graduate student may register. These are

- Master's Degree Requirements identifies courses that count towards the Master's degree requirements (including any additional graduate requirements or undergraduate courses specified by the supervisory committee or Department Chair). A B- is required for a pass.
- Doctoral Degree Requirements identifies courses that are to count towards the Doctoral Degree requirements (including any additional graduate requirements or undergraduate courses specified by the supervisory committee or Department Chair). A B- is required for a pass.
- Extra Credit Courses (EC): Extra Credit Courses are not required, but are available for those students who wish to develop a particular interest. Permission of the supervisory committee is necessary. Passing grades are B- in a graduate course and D- in an undergraduate course, although failures are not recorded (unless the failure is due to academic dishonesty). Courses designated as EC may subsequently be counted towards Master's or doctoral graduate degree requirements if approved by the School of Graduate Studies Admissions and Study Committee.

The University and the Department use a letter grade system in which the following are passing grades: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-. **A grade below B- is considered a failure in graduate courses.** While a B- standing is sufficient to earn a degree according to School of Graduate Studies criteria, **a failure in any course normally results in the Department recommending that the student not be allowed to continue.**

## **B. Deadline Expectations and Incomplete Grades**

Grade Deadlines: Students are required to submit papers for credit to their instructors no later than 10 days before the grade is due in the School of Graduate Studies. These dates are given in the Graduate Calendar. They are typically a few weeks after the end of classes.

Instructors' Design of Courses: Instructors have a responsibility to design courses in order that all requirements can normally be completed within the limits of a single term, taking into account students' overall course loads.

Exceptional Incompletes: Incompletes will be granted **only in very unusual circumstances**. To qualify, the student must apply for an incomplete by filling out the Department of Sociology Incomplete Application Form. This must be countersigned by the instructor and must be submitted to the graduate advisor for approval. Deadlines for removal of incomplete grades are given in the Calendar. Courses still incomplete after the deadline are given a grade of F and the student is not permitted to re-register without the approval of the School of Graduate Studies Committee on Graduate Admissions and Study.

## **C. Summer Courses**

To provide flexibility in the scheduling of students' coursework, the Department makes an effort to offer one or two graduate courses during the summer. Since many faculty are absent from campus during the summer, however, the availability of summer courses, and the particular course or courses offered, vary from year to year. In planning coursework, students should check with the Graduate Chair, Administrative Assistant, and individual faculty members to learn about summer course offerings.

## **4. SANDWICH THESES**

A sandwich thesis consists of a collection of articles, some of which have been published or are about to be published. They are often multi-authored. The student must provide a thematic introduction, and indicate her or his role in researching and writing the articles. Copyright clearance must be obtained from the publishers of the articles. This is an acceptable thesis format at McMaster. The sandwich thesis was instituted so as to allow students in fields where expectations around publishing are high the opportunity to publish without having to wait till after the thesis defence occurs. The sandwich thesis also recognizes the increasingly cooperative nature of research. Further information may be obtained in the Graduate Calendar and from the School of Graduate Studies.

## **5. THE M.A. PROGRAMME**

The Department offers three routes to an MA. Students may elect to take a coursework, major research paper (MRP) or thesis option.

The coursework option requires that students complete eight courses. These courses are normally completed within twelve months. Students are advised to take the coursework option if they have little background in sociology, or wish to give themselves exposure to a range of substantive areas of study in sociology. We advise students to consider the coursework option seriously both because it allows for the timely completion of the MA, and for those who want to continue their studies, provides the breadth of graduate level training that is a good foundation for doctoral studies.

The MRP option requires that students complete six courses and a major research paper. These requirements are normally expected to be completed within twelve months. The MRP option gives students the opportunity to both strengthen their general training in sociology and to plan and execute a major research project. Those pursuing this option are strongly advised to have a clearly defined topic before entering the M.A. programme. In addition, a proposal of approximately five pages must be completed and approved by December 15 and a copy must be submitted (see instructions below) to the Administrative Assistant by the end of the first day of classes in January. If this requirement is not met, you will be transferred into the coursework option in January.

Those students who choose the thesis option are advised that this option normally takes at least two years to complete, and sometimes longer. For those who select the thesis option, we strongly encourage you to have a clearly defined thesis topic before entering the M.A. programme. In addition, you must form a three-person supervisory committee by October 15, and subsequently develop a thesis proposal of approximately five pages. The proposal must be approved by the committee by December 15 and submitted (see instructions below) to the Administrative Assistant by the end of the first day of classes in January. If any of these requirements is not met, you will be transferred into the coursework option in January.

Whatever option is chosen, all M.A. candidates will be required to demonstrate their competence in theory. There are a number of ways to meet this theory requirement. The following material should be read carefully.

### **A. M.A. Theory Requirement**

To meet the theory requirement, all M.A. students must pass an accepted theory course (B-). If the student is awarded a grade of B+ or more, he/she will have met the theory requirement at the Ph.D. level as well should that student continue with graduate studies. In other words, in cases where students pursue a doctorate at

McMaster within two years of completing the M.A. degree, the Ph.D. Theory requirement will be waived.

Courses that meet the theory requirement are 750 (classical), and 751(contemporary).

## **B. M.A. Methods Requirement**

To meet the methods requirement, all M.A. students must pass an accepted 700-level methods course (B-). If the student is awarded a grade of B+ or more, he/she will have met the methods requirement at the Ph.D. level as well. In other words, in cases where students pursue a doctorate at McMaster within two years of completing the M.A. degree, the corresponding Ph.D. Methods requirement will be waived

Courses that meet the methods requirement are 740 (quantitative), 742 (qualitative), and 743 (historical).

## **C. M.A. Students Meeting Ph.D. Theory and Methods Requirements**

It is possible for M.A. students to meet the theory and the methods requirements for the M.A. and Ph.D. programmes simultaneously. To be eligible for this process, the student must have received a grade of "B+" or better for the course and must pursue a doctorate at McMaster within two years of completing the M.A. degree.

## **D. M.A. Coursework Option**

### **i. Schedule**

<b>Table 1: M.A. Coursework Schedule</b> (September Admission)			
	<b>Term 1 (Sept. - Dec.)</b>	<b>Term 2 (Jan – April)</b>	<b>Term 3 (May - Aug)</b>
<b>Year I:</b>	- 3 courses	- 3 courses	- 2 courses
	[Includes one theory & one methods course] Students must consult with their Graduate Advisor to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirements.		

The coursework option requires that students take eight courses (courses are one term, or four months, in length), including one course in theory (see 5A above) and one course in methods (see 5B above). Courses may not be taken at the 600 level with the exception of Sociology 6Z03. Students may optionally take one Sociology supervised research course (730 or 731). Students are permitted to enrol in one course outside of the department provided it is not a supervised research course.

Students must consult with their Graduate Advisor to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirements. Students must declare their intention to pursue this option by the end of the second term using the service request feature on Mosaic.

**NOTE:** At present the Department recognizes historical, qualitative or quantitative methods as fulfilling the methods requirement for the M.A.

## E. M.A. Coursework Option with Stream in Social Psychology

### i. Schedule

<b>Table 2: M.A. Coursework Schedule</b> (September Admission)			
	<b>Term 1 (Sept. - Dec.)</b>	<b>Term 2 (Jan – April)</b>	<b>Term 3 (May - Aug)</b>
<b>Year I:</b>	- 3 courses	- 3 courses	- 2 courses
	Must take two of the following courses: 702; 704; 711; 718; 755; 758 [Includes one theory & one methods course;] Students must consult with their Graduate Advisor to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirements.		

This coursework option stream requires that students take eight courses (courses are one term, or four months, in length), including one course in theory (see 5A above) and one course in methods (see 5B above) and two of the following courses: 702, 704, 711, 718, 755, or 758. Courses may not be taken at the 600 level with the exception of Sociology 6Z03. Students may optionally take one Sociology supervised research course (730 or 731). Students are permitted to enrol in one course outside of the department provided it is not a supervise research course.

Students must consult with their Graduate Advisor to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirements.

Students must declare their intention to pursue this option by the end of the second term using the service request feature on Mosaic.

**NOTE:** At present the Department recognizes historical, qualitative or quantitative methods as fulfilling the methods requirement for the M.A.

## F. M.A. Major Research Paper (MRP) Option

### i. Schedule

<b>Table 3: M.A. Major Research Paper (MRP) Schedule</b> (September Admission)			
	<b>Term 1 (Sept. - Dec.)</b>	<b>Term 2 (Jan – April)</b>	<b>Term 3 (May - Aug)</b>
<b>Year I</b>	- 3 courses - Dec 15: submit thesis proposal identify supervisor & second reader - approval required by the beginning of term 2	- MRP Option Approved - 3 courses - work on MRP begins	- May Symposium - final paper submitted by August 1
		OR Option Not Approved continue coursework option(see Table 1 or 2)	
[Includes one theory course & one methods course; students must consult with their Graduate Advisors to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirements.			

The MRP option requires approval by a supervisor. Those students completing the MRP option are required to complete six courses and prepare a major research paper on a sociological topic of their choice.

Students are expected to complete six courses (courses are one term or four months in length) including one course in theory (see 5A above) and one course in methods (see 5B above. Courses may not be taken at the 600 level with the exception of Sociology 6Z03. As independent study is incorporated into this path, students may not use a supervised research course (730 or 731) to fill course requirements. Students are permitted to enrol in one course outside of the department provided it is not a supervised research course.

Students must consult with their Graduate Advisors to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirements.

By the end of the first term, students will have prepared a proposal of approximately five pages (see items 2 and 3 below). The proposal must identify a supervisor and second reader. If the MRP option is not approved by the supervisor, students will be moved into the coursework stream and will continue following the schedule for that stream: three courses in term II and two over the summer.

Students complete the major research paper through the summer term. The paper is expected to be 7,500-10,000 words in length (approximately 30-40 pages).

The MRP can take one of two forms. The first is a critical literature review, in which the sociological literature relevant to a topic is researched, synthesized and discussed analytically. This would ideally provide a strong foundation in the

sociological literature for a future dissertation-length project. The second option is to complete a paper that includes an empirical component using pre-existing data and would take the form of a manuscript suitable for submission to an academic journal. Such a paper would include a research question, discussion of relevant literature, analysis of qualitative, quantitative, or historical data, and a discussion of the paper's contribution to the literature. In either case, the scope of the paper should be considered carefully and discussed with the supervisor. **A project that requires data collection, such as ethnography, a set of interviews, or a survey, is outside the scope of an MRP.**

For students entering in the Fall semester, the MRP must be completed and submitted to the supervisor, and the second reader by August 1. It will be marked on a pass/fail basis.

## **ii. Supervisor and Second Reader**

Students taking the MRP route will normally work with their Graduate Advisor as supervisor. In cases where the topic of inquiry makes it necessary to seek out a new supervisor with greater expertise in the area, a change in supervisor should be requested. Both the supervisor and second reader will submit their assessments of the MRP by August 31. In cases of dispute, the Chair of the Graduate Committee will act as a third reader. The decision of the Chair will be binding.

## **iii. MRP Proposal**

Students following the MRP route must write a proposal of approximately five pages, submit it to their supervisor **by December 15** of their first term in the programme and have it approved by the beginning of Term 2. An electronic and hard copy of the proposal, along with the department's Proposal Approval Form must be submitted to the Administrative Assistant by the end of the first week of classes in January. The goal of the proposal is allow students to select their topic of inquiry and have it approved in sufficient time to complete the MRP. Since the MRP proposal is expected to conform in structure to M.A. and Ph.D. proposals, students may want to consult the department guidelines for writing Ph.D. dissertation proposals (section 7-G below).

## **G. M.A. Thesis Option**

It is expected that most M.A. students will take the coursework or MRP route. The thesis option requires approval. Those students completing the thesis option are required to complete four courses (courses are one term or four months in length) and prepare and defend a thesis.

## i. Schedule

<b>Table 4: M.A. Thesis Schedule</b> (September Admission)			
	<b>Term 1 (Sept. - Dec.)</b>	<b>Term 2 (Jan – April)</b>	<b>Term 3 (May - Aug)</b>
<b>Year I</b>	- 3 courses - Oct 15: supervisory committee formed - Dec 15: thesis proposal submitted - approval by beginning of term 2	Thesis Option Approved - 1 course - data collection	- data collection
		OR Thesis Option Not Approved - continue coursework option (see Table 1)	
	[Includes one theory course, one 700-level methods course] Students must consult with their Graduate Advisors to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirement.		
<b>Year II</b>	- 1st draft by 7th week	- final draft by 7th week - oral defense by end of term	

Students are expected to take four courses with three scheduled in the first term. Course choices must include one course in theory (see 5A) and one course in methods (see 5B). Courses may not be taken at the 600 level with the exception of Sociology 6Z03. As independent study is incorporated into this path, students may not use a supervised research course (730 or 731) to fill course requirements. Students are not permitted to enrol in a course outside of the department.

If the thesis option is not approved, students will continue following the schedule for the coursework M.A: three courses in term II and two over the summer.

Students must consult with their Graduate Advisors to ensure they enrol in courses that satisfy the requirement.

By October 15 of the first term, students will form a three member thesis committee. With the committee's guidance, the student will prepare a proposal of approximately five pages (see items 2 and 3 below). Proposals must be submitted by December 15 and approved by the end of the first week of classes in January.

Approval of the proposal allows students to do preliminary data collection and preparation during the second term, and to continue researching and writing through the third term. Students always have the option of planning a more accelerated programme.

If a complete first draft of the thesis has not been submitted to the supervisory committee by the end of the fifth term, a supervisory meeting will be held by May 15 to create a timetable for completion by the end of the sixth term.

The thesis must be defended at a public oral examination in which the examining committee separately judges the quality of the thesis and the performance in the oral. Both must be rated satisfactory for the student to be recommended for graduation. A minimum of 10 days must elapse between the time the supervisor confirms the thesis is ready for defense to the Administrative Assistant and the thesis defence.

## **ii. Supervisory Committee**

In the M.A. thesis route, the supervisory committee must be set up by **October 15**. The committee must consist of three members. Normally the committee will be made up of faculty in the Department, though one member of the committee can be from another department. For further information, see the general information on supervisory committees (Section 2).

## **iii. Thesis Proposal**

Students following the M.A. thesis route must write a proposal of approximately five pages and submit the proposal to their supervisory committees **by December 15** of their first term in the programme. The proposal must also be approved by the supervisory committee before data collection begins. The proposal must be approved by the beginning of the second term. An electronic and a hard copy of the proposal and the department's Proposal Approval Form must be submitted to the Administrative Assistant by the end of the first week of classes in January. The goal of the proposal is to enable the student to focus early in the programme on the thesis and to obtain preliminary agreement on its acceptability and feasibility from a supervisory committee. Since M.A. and Ph.D. proposals are similar in structure, M.A. students may want to consult the department guidelines for writing Ph.D. dissertation proposals (section 7-H below).

## **H. M.A. Application to the Ph.D. Programme**

M.A. students who wish to pursue their Ph.D. at McMaster will be required to submit a new admission application by the regular admission deadline of January 15th. All applications to the Ph.D. programme will be considered together by the Graduate Admissions Committee.

## 6. THE PH.D. PROGRAMME

### A. Overview

All degree requirements must be completed within a maximum of six years of entering the Ph.D. programme. Funding will be provided only for the first four years under the condition of satisfactory progress. The schedule below is based on this funding period.

The requirements of the Ph.D. programme consist of:

- seven graduate courses beyond the M.A. These courses must:
  - (a) meet the methodology requirement (this includes the fulfilment of two methods requirements [quantitative and qualitative or historical]) (see C, below)
  - (b) meet the theory requirement (see D, below)
  - (c) include two quarter courses on professional development
  - (d) include at least two regularly scheduled 700-level courses offered by the Department in addition to those taken to meet the methodology and theory requirements
  - (e) optionally include no more than one Sociology supervised research course (730 or 731)
  - (f) optionally include no more than one graduate course offered by another McMaster department or by a Sociology Department in another university
- other than Sociology 6Z03, no 600-level courses are permitted
- fulfilment of two methods requirements (quantitative and qualitative or historical)
- the completion of comprehensive examinations in two special areas (see G, below)
  - in some cases a foreign language proficiency examination
- an approved one-page dissertation abstract
- an approved proposal for a Ph.D. dissertation; and,
- the writing and oral defence of a Ph.D. dissertation consisting of original research.

Detailed regulations for the Ph.D. are given below. Others are provided in the School of Graduate Studies Calendar. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with these regulations, and are subject to all regulations which were in effect at the time they entered the programme.

### B. Schedule

Students who fail to adhere to this schedule will:

- a) provide medical documentation explaining failure to adhere to the schedule;
- or,
- b) appear before the faculty members of the Graduate Committee to justify the delay in their progress. An attempt will be made to devise a satisfactory resolution for any outstanding problems. Failing this,

- c) students will receive an unsatisfactory progress report. Please note that two consecutive unsatisfactory progress reports threaten the status of a student in the programme.

<b>Table 1: Ph.D. Schedule</b> (September Admission)			
<b>Yearly</b>	<b>Supervisory Committee Meeting Report</b>		
	<b>OGS, SSHRC or CIHR Fellowship applications</b>		
	<b>Term 1 (Sept. - Dec.)</b>	<b>Term 2 (Jan. – April)</b>	<b>Term 3 (May - Aug)</b>
<b>Year I:</b>	All Students: Completion of 724#		
	- 3 courses	- 3 courses	-preparation for first comprehensive -dissertation abstract
	<b>OR</b> completion of at least 4 courses and Preparation for first comprehensive		- completion of one comprehensive
<b>Year II:</b>	All Students: Completion of 725#		
	- completion of one comprehensive exam	- preparation for 2nd comprehensive exam	- completion of 2nd comprehensive by 1st month (May)
	<b>OR</b> completion of remaining courses		- completion of dissertation proposal
<b>Year III:</b>	- dissertation data collection	- dissertation data analysis	- completion of 1st draft of dissertation
<b>Year IV:</b>	- rewriting dissertation	- completion of final draft of dissertation	- oral defense of dissertation by 2nd month (June)

### **i. Yearly**

- Supervisory Committee Meeting Report: A student must meet with his or her full committee at least once per academic year to complete a Supervisory Committee Report. Copies of the report form may be downloaded from the School of Graduate Studies website; there is a portion of the form that the student must complete and submit prior to the meeting. Two or more reports may be required if a marginal or unsatisfactory evaluation was received in a previous report or if marginal or unsatisfactory reports threaten the status of a student in the programme.

- As outlined in the offer of admission, all doctoral students must apply each year for all major external scholarships for which they are eligible. These include OGS and SSHRC or CIHR.

## ii. First Year

- By the end of their first year, doctoral students must complete six courses, or alternatively, at least four courses and one comprehensive exam. In addition, students must complete Sociology 724. **If these requirements have not been met, the student will be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress through the programme.**
- The course requirement includes satisfying the theory and methods requirements, and includes the options of taking one supervised research course (Sociology 730 or 731), and one graduate course in another McMaster department or sociology department at another university. Courses at the 600 level may not be taken for doctoral credit with the exception of Sociology 6Z03.
- A supervisory committee must be set up by the end of the second term; usually this is done earlier in the context of discussions about the dissertation abstract (see below). The committee must consist of three members, though in some cases it can include four. Two members (including the supervisor) must be from the Department. One member can be from another department. For further information, see the general information on supervisory committees at the beginning of the handbook. Please inform the Administrative Assistant of the composition of your committee.
- By the end of April of the first year, all students must complete a “Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Planner” and have it signed by their supervisor. Students who wish to change their schedule must submit a new form *at least a month* before the date of the exam previously scheduled.
- A one to two page dissertation abstract must be completed and approved by the student's supervisory committee by the end of the third term.
- For students taking six courses in their first year, in addition to Sociology 724, the third term of the first year must be spent preparing for the first comprehensive examination.
- For students taking fewer than six courses in their first year, in addition to Sociology 724, the first comprehensive exam must be taken in May of the first year.

### iii. Second Year

- By the end of the second year, all seven courses and both comprehensive exams must be completed. **If these requirements have not been met, the student will be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress through the program.**
- Area comprehensive examinations are taken in the months of October, January and May. By the end of the second year, students must successfully complete both comprehensive examinations and all seven required courses. Please see section F for comprehensive exam regulations.
- For students taking six courses, in addition to Sociology 724, in their first year, the first comprehensive exam must be completed in September/October of the second year in the programme. The second comprehensive may be written in either January or May of the second year.
- Students taking at least four courses, in addition to Sociology 724, and one comprehensive exam in their first year must complete their remaining coursework, including Sociology 725, and second comprehensive exam by the end of their second year in the programme.
- The dissertation proposal must be completed and approved by the student's supervisory committee **by the end of the third term of the second year**, normally the summer term. An electronic and a hard copy of the proposal and the department's Proposal Approval Form must be submitted to the Administrative Assistant (see section G)
- The foreign language requirement, when necessary, should be completed during the second year (see Section E).

### iv. Third Year

- To be 'on schedule' students should enter their third year with no requirements to complete but those associated with the dissertation. Dissertation proposals must be completed and accepted before the third year has begun. **If this requirement has not been met, the student will be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress through the program.**
- The third year is spent entirely on the dissertation. Details vary with the nature of the dissertation research (e.g., quantitative research using available data, quantitative research collecting data, data collected by participant observation, theoretical), but a draft of the dissertation should be completed by the end of the third year.

## **v. Fourth Year**

- The final year in the doctoral programme is spent entirely on the dissertation.
- The first term is spent rewriting the first draft of the dissertation on the basis of comments from, and meetings with, the supervisory committee.
- During the second term, the finishing touches are put on the final draft. After recommendation and approval from the student's supervisory committee, the dissertation is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies.
- Students should plan on an oral defence of their dissertation by the second month of the third term in their final year. This is normally the end of June. Oral defences are not normally scheduled during July and August. Students should allow approximately two months for the external assessor and other defence committee members to read the final draft of the dissertation before an oral defence can be held.

## **vi. Off-Campus Status**

Students should be aware that Ph.D. studies off-campus are not permitted except in special circumstances, and only with prior approval of the School of Graduate Studies Committee on Admissions and Study. Students who leave campus for an extended period without having a "Leave of Absence" or "Off-Campus Status" approved by Graduate Studies risk being automatically dropped from the graduate programme.

## **vii. Time Limits**

Financial support for Ph.D. work is normally for a maximum of four years. The University will not allow a Ph.D. student to continue her/his studies beyond six years from the time of admission or promotion to the Ph.D. programme.

Students in their fifth or sixth year are automatically eligible for discounted tuition fees.

## **C. Methodology Requirements**

Ph.D. candidates will be required to demonstrate competence in quantitative methods AND in either historical or qualitative methods.

## **i. Regulations re QUANTITATIVE Methods Qualification**

Demonstration of competence in quantitative methods is achieved by taking Sociology 740, for which Sociology 3H06 or Sociology 6Z03", or an equivalent course taken elsewhere, is a prerequisite. The instructor for Sociology 740 in any year will determine whether the student has the necessary prerequisite, or whether he/she will be required to take Sociology 6Z03. This determination will be made by means of a one-week take-home diagnostic exam in August/September of each year. More details can be found in Appendix A.

If the grade is "B+" or better, then the student will have fulfilled the quantitative methods requirement for the Ph.D. programme. If the student receives a course grade of "B-" or "B" the student must take the course again.

## **ii. Regulations re HISTORICAL and QUALITATIVE Methods Qualifications**

To be eligible to meet the historical and qualitative methods requirements, students must first pass the designated courses. For historical methods, the relevant course is Sociology 743, while for qualitative methods, the relevant course is Sociology 742. If the grade for these courses is "B+" or better, then the student will have fulfilled the historical or qualitative methods requirement for the Ph.D. programme. If the student receives a course grade of "B-" or "B" the student must take the course again.

## **D. Theory Requirement**

To meet the theory requirement, the student must pass a designated theory course with a grade of "B+" or better. Courses that meet this theory requirement are 750 and 751. If the student receives a course grade of "B-" or "B" the student will be required to take the course again.

## **E. Second Language Proficiency Requirement**

The Department may require a Ph.D. student to demonstrate competence in a second language if his/her chosen area for study and research makes knowledge of a second language desirable.

## **F. Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations**

The required Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations consist of examinations in two fields of sociology. Each exam is designed to test the student's critical and comprehensive understanding of a field of study and to demonstrate his or her ability to teach in the area. Areas must be chosen so that they do not overlap in content. Examination areas: Social Inequality; Sociology of Gender and Sexuality; Social Psychology; Sociology of Race and Ethnicity; Political Sociology and Social Movements and Work and Occupations.

The following regulations govern area examinations:

1. Each Comprehensive Area Committee must have at least three members, one of whom is to be designated as chair. A list of members is made available to all Ph.D. students.
2. Each Comprehensive Area Committee must prepare a bibliography indicating the date of preparation. The bibliography must include approximately 50 units of reading (where one unit equals one book or five articles or chapters). Particular examining committees may not revise existing lists or replace them with substitutes. To ensure equality across areas, there will be no supplementary readings beyond the required 50 units nor may students substitute readings for the required reading. All Area Committees must review and approve their lists at least once every four years. Revisions must be available for students at least six months prior to the relevant examination period.
3. Each Area Comprehensive Committee will develop a bank of 10 to 20 questions from which comprehensive questions normally are drawn. Each Area Committee will revise these questions at least every four years, along with the reading list. The questions will be made available to faculty and graduate students at least six months prior to the relevant examination period.
4. Examining Committees must have three members. For each Comprehensive Exam, students will provide a list of 4 to 6 faculty members in order of preference on their Doctoral Comprehensive Planner, which is turned in several months in advance of the Comprehensive Exam. The list of faculty must be drawn from the membership of the Comprehensive Area Committee. The Graduate Chair will then contact potential committee members to constitute the Comprehensive Examining Committee based on student preferences, the expertise and experience of faculty members, and balancing workload issues among faculty members. Students may not have more than the same two individual faculty members on both of their comprehensive exams. If it is not possible to draw the entire Comprehensive Examining

Committee from the preferences of the student, the Graduate Chair will contact the student to suggest alternatives.

5. Supervisors may sit on one or both Examining Committees, but may not act as chair on either examination.
6. Comprehensive examinations will normally be held in October, January, and May. Any requests for exceptions to this timing must be with due cause supported by the student's supervisor.

In unforeseen circumstances such as illness, students can petition to the Graduate Committee for alternative dates. Students must fill out the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Planner form in order to advise the relevant committee that they are planning to take the examination several months in advance. Comprehensive exams are held on the following dates: the second Friday in October; the second Friday in January; and the first Friday in May.

For 2017-2018, comprehensive examinations will take place on the following specific dates:

Pickup October 20, 2017    Return November 3, 2017  
Or Pickup January 5, 2017    Return January 19, 2017  
Or Pickup May 4 2018        Return May 18, 2018

7. All students taking a particular comprehensive exam at the same time will write a common exam with questions selected by the chairs of the examining committees involved and vetted by the Chair of the Area Committee and all members of the Examining Committees involved.
8. Comprehensive examinations consist of a two-week take-home examination. In all exams, a maximum of four questions will be grouped into two subtopics, where students have a choice of one of two questions within each subtopic. In all cases, questions are intended to test the student's comprehensive knowledge in the chosen field of study. The exam is not designed to be a research paper or thesis proposal. Furthermore, comprehensive examinations in different areas should be sufficiently different from each other to ensure that students are not essentially doing the same examination twice. It is the responsibility of the chairs of both the Area Committees as a whole and the specific examination committees to minimize the overlap between both different sections within the same examination and a student's two comprehensive examinations. Guidelines for the length of the student's answers or written work and acceptable formatting are described under item 11.

9. A portion of the examination must be invigilated. An oral examination will fulfill this requirement.
10. Students may pick their comprehensive examination questions at the Sociology Office or have them emailed by 4:00 p.m. on the pick-up date. Students may return their answers in person to the Sociology office by 3:30 p.m. on the return date or email the exam answers to their committee (copied to the Administrative Assistant) by 4:15 p.m. on the return date.
11. Format regulations for writing comprehensive examinations:
  - i. **Line Spacing** - Answers are to be **double spaced**.
  - ii. **Margins** - Answers must have a **one-inch border** on all sides.
  - iii. **Standard Fonts** - Answers must be in **12-point font** and in a typeface no smaller than Times Roman.
  - iv. **Question** - Clearly identify the question that is being answered at the **beginning** of each answer by typing in the question number. It is not necessary to retype the question as part of your answer or to attach a separate cover sheet. A copy of all of the exam questions is given to the committee with your returned answers.
  - v. **Length** - Answers are limited to 10 pages each. Footnotes and endnotes are discouraged, but if used, are to be included in the 10-page limit for each question.
  - vi. **Printing** - A legible copy is required.
  - vii. **Deadline** - Completed examinations must be handed in before 3:30 p.m. as it takes approximately 20 minutes to complete the copying and the office **closes** at 4:30 p.m. Emailed answers see point 10 above.

**NOTE: FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THESE FORMAT REGULATIONS MAY RESULT IN THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE RETURNING YOUR EXAM TO YOU UNREAD.**

12. Normally, no more than one month should elapse between the time the student submits a written portion of an examination and a judgment is rendered by the Examining Committee.
13. The outcome will be reported to the School of Graduate Studies as “pass with distinction”, “pass”, or “fail”. Following the SGS Calendar (4.3), students who fail the exam will be given a second opportunity to take the comprehensive exam. If an exam is failed, the student will be informed in writing, with detailed instructions about how to improve the exam in the second opportunity.
14. In the event of a failure, the Chair of the Examining Committee will request the Graduate Chair reschedule a second-opportunity exam. This exam will take place no later than four weeks from the date of the failure. The exam committee must decide upon new questions for the second-opportunity exam and submit them to the Administrative Assistant. Like the original exam, the

written portion of the second-opportunity exam will be due two weeks following the pick-up date. The oral exam will be scheduled within one month of the submission of written responses. If the student fails the exam a second time, the Department will recommend to the Faculty Committee on Graduate Admissions and Study that the student be withdrawn from the programme.

Normally, students will be expected to complete coursework, comprehensives and the proposal within twenty-four months after entering the Ph.D. programme.

## **G. Format for Dissertation Proposal**

Dissertation proposals should be brief, concrete, and focused. The purpose of the proposal is to set out a plan for the dissertation research and for writing the dissertation. The proposal also functions as a kind of contract between the student and the committee. A concrete dissertation proposal, once approved, should eliminate the possibility of later conflict over the scope and nature of the dissertation. Well formulated dissertation proposals should be about 15 to 30 double-spaced pages.

While the specific format of dissertation proposals can vary, a proposal in general should include the following elements:

- A clear introductory statement of the problem to be researched. The research problem for the dissertation must represent an original contribution to sociology; the nature of this contribution should be made clear in the introductory section of the proposal. (Length suggestion: 1-2 pages.)
- A brief, critical review of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature in the specific area of the dissertation. This should not be an exhaustive review; rather, it should be similar to that of a sociology article, by focusing on how other works in the field have approached a problem similar to the dissertation topic, articulating claims in the field, and making a case that existing work is insufficient to account for/explain/predict the research problem. If students are testing hypotheses, they should be stated clearly in this section (either throughout the section as articulations of particular claims in the literature, or collected at the end). (Length suggestion: 7-15 pages.)
- A description of the research methods to be employed in the dissertation, and the manner in which they will be employed. It is insufficient, for example, to say that a survey will be conducted (of what population?, with what questionnaire?); that data will be analysed by regression analysis (of which variables?); or that participant observation will be employed (of what group? to what end?) It is important to keep the data-collection plan realistic and within the means of the student. In quantitative research, in particular, it is often better to use existing

data sources, even when these do not precisely reflect the student's interests, than to collect inadequate data of one's own. This is the most important part of the proposal, because it concretely describes the research to be undertaken. (Length suggestion: 6-12 pages.)

- Research "instruments," such as questionnaires or interview schedules, should be appended to the proposal. (These are not included in the 15-30 page guideline for length.)
- A tentative chapter outline, with chapter titles and one-sentence descriptions. (Length suggestion: 1-2 pages.)
- A tentative schedule of work, indicating when each part of the dissertation is to be completed. Be realistic. (Length suggestion: 1 page.)
- Remember that research that involves human participants requires approval by the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

An electronic and hard copy of the proposal and the department's Proposal Approval Form **must be** submitted to the Administrative Assistant.

## H. Dissertation

Doctoral dissertations are normally limited to no more than 300 manuscript pages. Should a substantially greater length be required, the supervisory committee must obtain written approval from the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the submission of the thesis for the defence. (See School of Graduate Studies Calendar section 2.8.1)

General instructions regarding dissertation format and acceptable methods of reproduction can be found on the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://gs.mcmaster.ca/doctoral-degree>

The final dissertation must be approved by the student's supervisory committee, an external examiner from outside the university and in some cases an internal reviewer from inside the university but outside the department. The dissertation must be orally defended.

## I. Oral Dissertation Defence

In this examination, the candidate will defend the dissertation and answer questions the committee finds appropriate. The Dean of Graduate Studies or his/her delegate will serve as Chair of the Examination Committee. The committee normally will consist of three members of the supervisory committee, a McMaster faculty member

who is not a member of the supervisory committee and an external examiner. If the external examiner is within easy travelling distance of the university, he or she will be invited by SGS to attend in person. Otherwise the external may attend by Skype. The external also completes a report which the candidate will receive after the defense.

Dissertations are public documents and cannot be classified as secret or not accessible.

## **J. Change of Status and Time Limitations**

Requests for Leave of Absence, for Off-Campus Status, and for Part-Time Status must be approved by the Graduate Admissions and Study Committee of the Graduate School. Each case is examined on its merit and no request for extensions or change of status is automatically approved. Though the Graduate Chair of the Department is asked to make a recommendation on these requests, the final decision on these matters is made by the Graduate Admissions and Study Committee of the Faculty. This is a University committee made up of members from several departments and is chaired by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

Consequently, no member of the Department of Sociology can guarantee that a student will be granted permission to change his or her status.

Graduate students should also be aware that it is their responsibility, in consultation with their supervisor, to file requests for change of status if these become necessary. The Graduate School does not automatically continue a student in the graduate programme beyond the normal period required to complete a degree.

Students who have not completed the Ph.D. in SIX YEARS are "required to withdraw in good standing due to time limit". Should they subsequently complete their degree requirements, they must apply for readmission to the graduate programme. Permission will not be granted unless the Department is willing to certify that all requirements but the final oral examination have been completed. Students on withdrawn status must understand that the faculty (including their supervisors) have no obligation to work with them. Please see SGS Calendar section 4.6 for more information

Students who withdraw or who are automatically dropped from the graduate programme of the Department will have to apply for readmission in the regular manner, and their new applications are placed in competition with those students applying to the Department for the first time.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A: QUANTITATIVE METHODS DIAGNOSTIC EXAM

All doctoral students are required to meet a quantitative methods requirement. To do so, a student must pass Sociology 740 with a minimum grade of B+. Coursework, MRP, and thesis M.A. students may take Sociology 740 to meet their methods requirement. (For further information see the main text of the Graduate Handbook).

The prerequisite for Sociology 740 is either Sociology 6Z03 or permission of the instructor as determined by a diagnostic exam. This is a three-day take-home exam. Students may use whatever written sources they wish to assist with the exam, and—where calculation is required—students can check their work with a computer program. Students may not, however, seek assistance from others. Please direct any questions to the instructor of Sociology 740. Currently it is Marisa Young (myoung@mcmaster.ca).

The diagnostic take-home will cover basic statistical methods, with questions drawn from the following topics:

- Summarizing distributions: measures of central tendency (mean, median), and dispersion (variance, standard deviation, range)
- Probability distributions: expectation (mean), variance, and standard deviation of a random variable
- Standard sampling distributions
- Basic statistical inference: confidence intervals and hypothesis testing
- Tests and confidence intervals for means and proportions: single mean, difference in means, difference in proportions, one-way analysis of variance
- Two-way and three-way contingency tables: percentage tables, chi-square test of independence
- Basic data coding and interpretation of statistical program output

Any competent introductory statistics text should cover these topics adequately, so if students have a favourite book, they may use it for review and reference. If students are looking for a book, Dr. Young recommends the following:

David Moore, *The Basic Practice of Statistics* (any edition)

Levin, Fox and Forde, *Elementary Statistics in Social Research* (any edition)

The test is available by request from the Graduate Administrative Assistant. Please return directly to Dr. Marisa Young (youngd@mcmaster.ca)

## APPENDIX B: OTHER MANDATORY COURSES

**All graduate students at McMaster must complete the following courses in addition to their Sociology degree requirements. Students who successfully complete SGS 101# and 201# during the MA are not required to repeat the courses if they enter the PhD programme. Teaching Assistants, please refer to the “Letter of Understanding re Health & Safety Training” (McMaster/CUPE 3906 Unit 1 Collective Agreement).**

- 1)     SGS 101: Academic Research Integrity and Ethics  
       SGS 201: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Training

Register on Mosaic for each course. Then, log-in to Avenue to Learn <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca> to read the course materials and complete the examination.

You must complete these during your first term. If you do not, you will not be permitted to graduate or register for future years. Results (P or F) are recorded on your transcript at the end of the first term.

- 2) Health and Safety training

Again register for all training on Mosaic and complete the course on Avenue to Learn.

- a. Orientation
- b. Asbestos Awareness
- c. Ergonomics
- d. Fire Safety
- e. Slips, Trips and Falls
- f. WHMIS
- g. Violence and Harassment Prevention in the Workplace