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INTRODUCTION

The KSU/AU Joint Doctoral Program in Sociology has been in operation since September 1973. In March of 1973 preliminary accreditation was awarded by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Final or full accreditation was awarded in April 1977. This unique concept in graduate education allows the student to enroll through either Kent State University or The University of Akron and function as a student at both schools. Students take course work and interact with faculty members from both schools and have access to the facilities located in both departments.

The joint program in sociology leads to the PhD degree. Although the MA is awarded in the course of working toward the PhD, students are not admitted who are only interested in pursuing a terminal Master’s degree. The program is generally intended for students enrolled full-time (i.e., at least 8 credit hours per semester).

The daily operations of the program are handled by the Graduate Coordinators of the respective departments. When students have questions or concerns, they should see the Graduate Coordinator of the department in which they are administratively based. Admission, assistantships, registration, record keeping, and degree clearance are handled by each respective administrative department.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

What We Expect from Graduate Students

The purpose of this section of the handbook is to outline expectations of all graduate students in the Sociology Department at Kent State University. To be successful in our program, it is important that you read what follows thoroughly and carefully. You should also review the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics: http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm

In addition to the handbook, you should also familiarize yourself with two web pages in the "Graduate Program" section of the Sociology Department's website:

(1) The "Forms and Resources" page provides you with easy access to annotated documents and forms (or links to them) that will facilitate your progress through the program and call your attention to important rules, procedures, and regulations. It is very important for you to know the rules, regulations, and deadlines. We have developed the "Forms and Resources" page to ensure that you have all the information you need. The current URL for the "Forms and Resources" page is: http://www.kent.edu/sociology/forms-and-resources-0

(2) The answers to questions that many students have had over the years can be found on the "Current Students" page. This page provides you with answers to the most commonly asked questions by graduate students—including those concerning coursework, procedures for theses and dissertations, etc. This page is "live" and updated regularly, so please check it first when you have a question. The URL is: http://www.kent.edu/sociology/current-students

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1 This document is a modified and customized version of a document developed by Dr. Alissa Sherry, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Texas at Austin.
Being informed about the expectations others have of you and planning your work both in the short-term and in the long-term is part of being a professional. Please read carefully through the entire Graduate Handbook and review the department website.

**Addressing Professors**

Upon entering the program, many students wonder about how to address the faculty. Even when you hear other graduate students call a professor by their first name, it is always professional to use the professor's title unless they indicate to you that it is okay/preferable to use first names. Specifically, unless a faculty member tells you to use her or his first name, you should use the titles of "Dr." or "Professor."

**Respect**

In our department, as in any professional setting, it is very important to behave respectfully. There are some behaviors that will not be tolerated, such as (but not limited to) making racial, sexual orientation, or gender slurs, making other inappropriate jokes at the expense of others, yelling at or losing your temper with faculty, staff, or students or otherwise showing disrespect, and other such behaviors.

**Trusting Faculty and "The Process"**

Professors do things for a reason. You may not always be aware of these reasons until after a class has ended or even until after you've graduated and have been working in the field for a while. It is very important that you place trust in your professors and believe that what they do is in your best interests. Professors are teaching the courses they are teaching and researching the topics they are researching because they are experts in these areas. Trust the expertise of faculty and make it your fallback position that things are done for a reason. If you do not agree with pedagogical styles or decisions made in courses, you will have your opportunity to provide feedback through course evaluations.

**Email Communication**

- Keep emails short, courteous, and to-the-point. Professional email (including email to a professor) has a specific purpose such as making information requests, setting up a meeting, or communicating an important fact.
- Write the purpose of your email in the subject line.
- Use proper greeting and ending: Start with ‘Dear Professor X,’ or ‘Hello Prof. X.’ End your message with a “thank-you” or other such closing.
- Check your grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Write back promptly. Nothing is worse than getting a reply to an email you sent 3 weeks ago. Not only does it show you don’t care, but it is confusing to the original sender who has since forgotten why they emailed you in the first place.
- Remember that email is not private. When you send an email to someone, it goes through many networks before it reaches your recipient and may even leave copies of your email on a server, where it may later be retrieved.
**Meetings with Faculty**

You should meet with faculty during their office hours if possible. Office hours are posted next to each faculty member's door at the start of every semester. If you want to make an appointment with a faculty member, you should email and ask to drop by their office hours, or if that is not possible, then indicate the days/times when you are otherwise available to meet (e.g., days/times that do not conflict with your courses).

**Assistantship Duties**

Students who are funded by the department will be assigned to work for specific faculty members for a certain number of hours each week, usually 10 or 20 hours. For example, if you are assigned to a particular faculty member for 10 hours, you should expect to spend an average of 10 hours of your time each week doing what that faculty member asks you to do as part of your assistantship. Remember, you are being compensated to do this work. It is your responsibility to budget your time such that you are able to complete your assistantship tasks efficiently and to the best of your ability. Continued funding is contingent upon you satisfactorily completing the assigned responsibilities that come with your assistantship.

**Assistantship Assignments and Additional Responsibilities**

You will be given an opportunity to express your preference for GA assignments during the summer. While we make every effort to align these preferences, that is not always possible. Being involved in research is an excellent way to get to know professors and develop relationships with them. While your assigned GA tasks should always come first, we encourage you to participate in other faculty members’ research. We encourage you to be proactive and entrepreneurial about your research interests.

Your assistantship duties begin when the semester officially begins, and they end when the semester officially ends. You must be available to perform your duties as a GA for this entire period. For example, it is not acceptable for you to leave for winter vacation before or even during exam week (i.e., before the semester officially ends), in which case the faculty member to which you are assigned may end up performing a number of tasks that would otherwise have been assigned to you.

If you have an illness or life problem that interferes with your ability to complete your assistantship for two weeks or less, you need to contact your assigned professor and the Graduate Coordinator and file the paperwork for a **short-term absence**. For absences longer than two weeks, you should discuss taking a leave of absence. In either case, it is important that you keep your GA professor, your advisor, and the Graduate Coordinator informed regarding circumstances that prevent you from completing your assigned duties.

**Class Attendance and Punctuality**

Class attendance is mandatory. If you have to miss class occasionally (e.g., because you are sick), contact the professor by email as soon as possible to inform them of your absence, preferably before the class. Please read all of your syllabi carefully so that you are fully aware of each faculty member's expectations when it comes to absences and how they are to be handled. Please be on time for class.
Coursework Preparation

A general rule of thumb in graduate school is: for every one hour of class, students should be spending three hours studying/reading/doing homework outside of class. Since most graduate classes are three hours, this means that you should be spending, on average, about 9 hours per week studying and working for each class.

Embracing Evaluations and Feedback

External evaluation, self-evaluation, and criticism are the "life blood" of the Academy. Every member of the faculty has been exposed to both constructive and often difficult criticism and feedback. You may find this central feature of graduate school quite difficult to adjust to because you would not be in this program if you had not excelled as an undergraduate. In graduate school and in academic work generally, even high quality work is critiqued. Learning to use criticism of your work constructively without taking it personally is one of the most important things you will learn to do in graduate school. There is a great deal of learning and growth that can be done if you are open and mature about the process of evaluation and criticism. So, put your feedback into perspective. Being open to feedback, even if it requires taking a few deep breaths, is one of the most important skills you need to develop right away as a graduate student, and as a professional more generally.

Writing and Other Fundamental Skills

Being a good writer does not come easily to everyone, but it is absolutely critical to your success in graduate school and beyond. Your professors and thesis/dissertation advisors should not be put in the position of being copy editors that spend valuable time line-editing your work so that your substantive ideas are communicated effectively. If you receive feedback indicating that your writing needs work, it is important for you to make use of the university's "Writing Commons" (http://www.kent.edu/writingcommons). Especially in the case of theses and dissertations, a faculty member may ask you to work on your writing with staff at the Writing Commons before reading and commenting on drafts of your work.

In addition to the Writing Commons, the university also offers consulting support for statistical and qualitative software, research methods and data analysis, grant writing, the publication process, and scholarly writing. If you would like additional support in these areas, we encourage you to take advantage of KSU's "Statistical & Qualitative Software Instruction and Consulting Services." The URL for this service is here: http://libguides.library.kent.edu/content.php?pid=303862&sid=2490751

Participating in Department Life

As Durkheim pointed out long ago, people who participate in the same activities and "rituals" develop a common outlook and an energy that is vital for to the overall success and health of our department. Every semester there will be a number of department events outside the normal routine of coursework, assistantship duties, and other research- and teaching-related activities, including lunches with visiting job candidates, job talks, campus visits for prospective graduate students, colloquia, and department banquets. We consider participation in the life of the department to be a crucial dimension of your professional socialization and so you are expected to attend as many of these activities as possible.
PROGRAM DESIGN AND TIMELINE

The joint program in sociology begins with regularly scheduled courses and seminars. To maximize progression and success in the program, it is important that students follow the prescribed sequencing of courses. This foundation, which includes a course to prepare students for professional careers in sociology, is supplemented by faculty advising and supervision of research projects, departmental colloquia, teacher training, and a supportive peer environment. Development of research expertise is fostered through required course offerings in theory, research design, qualitative and quantitative methodologies and statistics as well as elective offerings in a variety of substantive areas.

Coursework

Enrollment requirements for the degree are 90 semester credit hours. These include 28 credit hours of required courses, 26 hours of elective courses (9 hours in the student's primary area, 9 hours in their secondary area, and at least 8 hours outside the student’s two areas), 6 Thesis I hours, and 30 Dissertation I hours. Please note that no more than 6 credits of individual investigation or research hours may be applied toward the degree as elective credits. Further, no more than 3 credits of 500-level (UA) or 50000-level (KSU) coursework may be applied toward the degree as elective credits. These 500- or 50000-level credits may only be taken at the home institution. Finally, no more than 3 credits of graduate-level classes taken outside the joint program may be applied toward the degree as elective credits.

Students who desire to take any graduate-level electives outside the joint program must submit a written request to the graduate education committee in their home department and receive formal written approval prior to enrolling in the class. In the request the student must indicate (1) the course name and number, (2) the department in which the course is being offered, (3) the instructor’s name, (4) the official graduate catalog description of the course (or equivalent if the course is not listed in the graduate catalog), (5) if relevant, the department area with which the course is most closely aligned (inequality, social psychology, medical sociology/mental health, and criminology/deviance), and (6) a brief explanation detailing how the course (a) contributes to the student’s program of study/interests and (b) supplements joint program course offerings. If available, the student should also include a copy of the course syllabus along with the request. First-year students who wish to take an outside course must explain why they perceive a need to take the outside course in their first year of study instead of taking the course at a later time.

The schedule below reflects "normal" progress in the joint program for full-time students. More specific information about completing each facet of the program is located in later sections of the handbook. Graduate students are responsible for ensuring that required forms and paperwork are submitted on time and as required. Please see Appendix B for a complete list of the paperwork required for each step of the program.

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2In addition to the recommended sequencing of courses, students should refine and develop their course plans in regular consultation with their advisors.
Program Schedule

Year 1: Fall (10 hours)
- Professional and Ethical Issues in Sociology (3 credit hours)
- Early Sociological Theory (3 credit hours)
- Quantitative Research Methodology (4 credit hours)

Year 1: Spring (10 hours)
- Multivariate Techniques in Sociology (4 credit hours)
- Elective Course in primary area (3 credit hours)
- Elective Course in secondary area (3 credit hours)

Year 2: Fall (10 hours)
- Advanced Data Analysis (4 credit hours)
- Elective Course in primary area (3 credit hours)
- Thesis Hours (3 credit hours)

Year 2: Spring (10 hours)
- Contemporary Sociological Theory (3 credit hours)
- College Teaching of Sociology (3 credit hours)
- Thesis Hours (3 credit hours)
- Individual Investigation/Research Hours (1 credit hour)

(For those entering program without a thesis-based Master’s degree in Sociology, adequate progress requires thesis research to be completed and defended by the end of this semester)

Year 3: Fall (9 hours)
- Elective Course in primary area (3 credit hours)
- Elective Course in secondary area (3 credit hours)
- Elective Course - Individual Investigation/Research Hours or other elective (3 credit hours)
- Individual Investigation/Research Hours (1 credit hour; work on publishing thesis)

Year 3: Spring (10 hours)
- Qualitative Research Methods (4 credit hours)
- Elective course in secondary area (3 credit hours)
- Special Topics - SOC 72895 (3 credit hours; work on advancing to candidacy)

(For adequate progress, the student should advance to candidacy by the end of this semester.)

Year 4: Fall (15 hours)
- Dissertation I (15 credit hours)

Year 4: Spring (15 hours)
- Dissertation I (15 credit hours)

(For adequate progress, dissertation proposal defended by end of this semester; the student should enroll in 15 hours of Dissertation II for the summer)
Year 5: Fall (15 hours)
Dissertation II (15 credit hours)

Year 5: Spring (15 hours)
Dissertation II (15 credit hours)

*(Defend dissertation by end of Spring Year 5)*

**Maintaining Good Academic Standing**

1) For course grades:
   a. Students who receive more than one B-, C+, or C will be reminded in writing of the university policy: “Graduate students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.000 grade point average (GPA). A graduate student who receives more than 8 credit hours of grades lower than B (3.000) is subject to dismissal. A graduate student who receives more than 4 credit hours of grades lower than C (2.000) is also subject to dismissal.” (see university [Graduate Catalog](#)→Academic Policies→Academic Standing – Graduate Student). The graduate coordinator should be alerted if this grade is received in the fall.
   b. Students who receive a second B-/C+/C OR one grade lower than "C" will receive an official “warning” in writing. This warning, if desired, may be communicated to the Dean’s Office. It will not be communicated to the Registrar.
   c. Students will receive a "dismissal" recommendation when they receive a third B-/C+/C (or lower) OR a second grade lower than "C."³

2) For cumulative GPA:
   a. Students whose cumulative GPA drops below 3.2 will be reminded of the university policy: “Graduate students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.000 grade point average (GPA). A graduate student who receives more than 8 credit hours of grades lower than B (3.000) is subject to dismissal. A graduate student who receives more than 4 credit hours of grades lower than C (2.000) is also subject to dismissal.” (see university [Graduate Catalog](#)→Academic Policies→Academic Standing – Grade Point Average).
   b. Students whose cumulative GPA is at or above 3.0 but whose term GPA falls below 3.0 will receive a “warning” and be reminded of the university policy: “Graduate students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.000 grade point average (GPA).” This warning, if desired, may be communicated to the Dean’s Office. It will not be communicated to the Registrar.
   c. Students who have a cumulative GPA that falls below 3.0 will be recommended for probation. The dean will be notified, and if the dean concurs, the registrar will be notified and the student will be placed on immediate probation. They have one semester to bring their cumulative GPA up to 3.0 while meeting other program requirements. If they are able to do so, the dean will be notified, and if the dean agrees, the student will return to good academic standing. If the student is unable to bring their cumulative GPA to 3.0 or above after one semester, the student will receive a “dismissal” recommendation from the department. Importantly, per policy, “A student

³ There is no “probation” for grade violations because these cannot be remedied.
may not be appointed or reappointed as a graduate assistant while on probation. A student on an official leave of absence cannot be recommended for probation or dismissal.”

3) Students will otherwise be in “good standing.”

Course Work: Breadth Requirement

The Joint PhD Program offers courses in four areas of concentration:

1. Criminology and Deviance
2. Inequality (Race, Class, and Gender)
3. Medical and Mental Health
4. Social Psychology

Students are required to identify two of the department’s four program areas and take nine (9) hours of coursework in each area. The remaining elective hours for the degree should be outside the student’s two areas. In order to determine which courses count toward specific areas, students should consult with their advisor and the Graduate Coordinator.

A Coursework Approval Form (shown below and available on the Forms & Resources page) must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator via the Graduate Secretary early in the semester in which the student is finishing their coursework. According to the Program Schedule above, this would be the spring of Year 3. The Graduate Coordinator determines whether the course requirements will be fulfilled. Where ambiguities arise, the Graduate Coordinator should consult with area faculty members.

A student who enters the program having taken a graduate course that they wish to count toward their two areas must petition the Graduate Coordinator who, in consultation with the graduate committee, will decide if the course meets an area requirement. Appeals regarding a decision of the Graduate Coordinator may be made to the Department Chair.

The designation of independent investigations is made by the instructor of record. Only 6 hours of independent investigation or research hours may count toward fulfillment of degree requirements.

Choosing an Advisor

All incoming students are required to choose an advisor and submit the required form by the end of the first year. The form is available on the Forms & Resources page.

EVALUATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING

As part of the evaluation of student progress, all graduate students teaching a course will be evaluated by a faculty member appointed by the Department Chair and/or Graduate Coordinator. The review is intended to provide constructive feedback, to be an opportunity for continual improvement, and in keeping with the view that high quality pedagogy is best achieved when we share our teaching experiences. Please see the “Additional Forms” section of the Forms & Resources page for copies of the evaluation forms.
The Graduate Coordinator and/or Department Chair will appoint a faculty member to complete the evaluation no later than the tenth week of the semester. The faculty member will meet with the graduate student prior to scheduling the classroom visit. During that meeting, the faculty member and graduate student will review the course syllabus, discuss areas of focus for the evaluation, and review the collegial evaluation form that will be used by the faculty member. Again, evaluation forms are available in the “Additional Forms” section of the Forms & Resources page. After the classroom visit, the faculty member and graduate student will hold a post-evaluation meeting. The faculty member will complete the evaluation form and submit to the Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair no later than the Friday of the penultimate week of the semester.

**COMPLETING THE MASTER’S DEGREE**

**The Master’s Thesis**

Completing a Master’s thesis is the final MA requirement for students who are making adequate progress toward the doctoral degree. The aim of this requirement is to produce a journal-length empirical paper (i.e., a thesis) that can be revised and sent out for review soon after completion of the final defense. In completing this requirement the student may conduct original empirical research, replication research, or secondary analysis. Care should be taken to select a topic and question that allows for the thesis to be completed by the end of the spring semester of the student’s second year in the program.

**NOTE:** All research projects must be submitted to the appropriate Institutional Review Board. No data collection and/or analysis should proceed on any empirical project until the IRB has given formal approval (or exemption) of the project.

**Thesis Advisor**

Each student should select a member of the graduate faculty whose areas of specialization correspond to the student’s own research interests. Students may select a graduate faculty member from either campus to serve as their thesis advisor. The selection of a thesis advisor should occur no later than the end of the spring semester of the first year.

When a faculty member agrees to serve as advisor, the student should complete the “Declaration or Change of Advisor Form” (available here) and submit it to the Graduate Coordinator.

**Thesis Committee**

The student, in connection with his or her thesis advisor, shall select two additional graduate faculty members within the joint program to serve on the thesis committee. The thesis committee should consist of graduate faculty members from the joint program who are best suited to provide advice and guidance regarding the proposed topic under investigation.
Thesis Proposal

A written thesis proposal is to be developed by the student in consultation with their advisor. The proposal shall include a statement of the problem, theory and hypotheses, intended methodology, data source and data analytic techniques (see Appendix A at the end of this handbook for a suggested outline). The student is to submit the written thesis proposal to all members of the thesis committee no less than 10 days (but preferably two weeks) in advance of a proposal meeting date. The full committee must then meet with the student to discuss and approve/disapprove of the written proposal.

Approval of the proposal will be indicated by the signature of each member of the committee on the Approval of Thesis Topic form (see Forms & Resources page for instructions), a copy of which will be kept on file in the student’s home department office. The proposal meeting should occur no later than the semester prior to the thesis defense. Furthermore, the Approval of Thesis Topic form must be signed and IRB approval must be obtained before the student begins data collection.

Final Thesis Defense

When the thesis is believed to be in completed, defensible form, it is left to the discretion of the thesis advisor whether to call a formal pre-defense meeting of the committee or to poll committee members as to the likelihood of a successful oral defense of the document. At least 10 days prior to conducting the pre-defense meeting or poll, a copy of the thesis must be distributed to each committee member. When the pre-defense meeting is held or the poll is conducted, the committee may reject the thesis, require major or minor revisions, or accept it for oral examination. A thesis may be reconsidered for defense as soon as recommended revisions (if any) have been made.

The thesis advisor will schedule the oral defense no sooner than 10 days after the (revised) thesis document has been accepted for oral examination by the committee. A notice of the time and place of the defense will be circulated among the joint program’s faculty and graduate students at least 10 days prior. An “M.A. thesis defense announcement template” is available on the Forms & Resources page. Any interested departmental members may attend the meeting.

At the conclusion of the thesis defense, the committee will vote to accept the thesis as is, accept the document once specific conditions have been met, or to reject the thesis. The thesis advisor, and any committee members who wish to do so, will examine the final thesis document to ensure compliance with the committee’s recommendations. For the thesis to be formally accepted, all committee members must sign the signature page of the thesis. Be sure to see the Forms & Resources page of the departmental website for all necessary forms related to thesis and degree completion, including the Report of Thesis Final Examination form and signature pages (see instructions on the Forms & Resources page), which should be brought to the defense.

Final Requirements and Submission of Thesis to the Graduate School

Students should consult the appropriate graduate school website for required formatting instructions, submission guidelines, due dates, and thesis binding. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of the deadlines set by their Graduate School for graduation. The deadline to apply for graduation is early in the semester you plan to graduate (see http://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-deadlines). Missing this deadline can result in a fee or denied application. Be sure that your thesis advisor receives a final electronic copy of the completed document that is accepted by the Graduate School.
ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Advancement to candidacy is accomplished when the student has completed all coursework (except for dissertation hours) and has written and successfully passed a 9,000 word Candidacy Paper. All students should aim to complete this process in the second semester of their third year.

Overview

While the student is completing coursework (i.e., in the spring of Year 3), advancement to candidacy is completed contemporaneously in three steps. First, the student declares a substantive focus within their primary area and creates a candidacy exam committee. Second, the student writes a 2,500-word candidacy proposal and submits it to their committee. Third, based on comments/suggestions from the committee, the student writes a longer 9,000-word candidacy paper in the style of an Annual Review of Sociology article. To pass the exam process, the student must not receive more than one “fail” outcome on the candidacy paper. The student has up to two attempts to advance to candidacy.

Steps

Step 1: Declaration of Program Area/Substantive Focus and Committee Formation: Doctoral students should identify a substantive focus/topic within their primary area. Examples include the stress process (medical sociology/mental health), mass incarceration (deviance/criminology), identity processes (social psychology), and social mobility (inequality). Once the substantive topic within the student’s primary area has been identified, the student should submit a Candidacy Committee Form (available on the Forms & Resources page) to the Graduate Coordinator via the Graduate Secretary. On this form, the student will identify the committee chair and two other faculty members and obtain their signatures, indicating that all have agreed to serve on the committee.

Step 2: Candidacy Proposal and Reading List: Following the Advancement to Candidacy Timeline (see below), the student will email their committee chair an attached candidacy proposal not to exceed 2,500 words, excluding references and any tables or figures. The document should be double-spaced with a 12-point font and one-inch margins.

The goal of the longer candidacy paper (see Step 3 below) is to provide an in-depth critical analysis of the literature on a substantive topic through summary, analysis, comparison, synthesis, etc. In other words, the longer, candidacy paper will organize a body of literature, evaluate it, synthesize it, identify patterns and trends, and, most importantly, reveal gaps and articulate future directions. The shorter, Step 2 candidacy proposal should describe, in general terms, how this will be accomplished. It should overview the student’s general plans for how they aim to review the chosen substantive topic. As with an Annual Review of Sociology article, the proposal should 1) list the main sections and sub-sections to be included in the longer candidacy paper, 2) briefly describe/overview the literatures, central ideas, important themes, etc. that will be explored in each section/sub-section of the candidacy paper, and 3) summarize what the student sees as the gaps and future directions that the candidacy paper will illuminate.
Along with the 2,500-word proposal, the student must at the same time submit a list of the references that they plan to draw on in developing the longer candidacy paper. This should include readings in addition to those cited in the candidacy proposal. The reading list should be organized by the main sections and sub-sections to be included in the longer paper (as identified in the candidacy proposal).

The formal exam process officially begins once the student emails the proposal and reading list to the committee. If the student subsequently withdraws or fails to complete any of the remaining steps, this is counted as a failure of the exam.

It is expected that the student will develop the candidacy proposal and reading list with limited feedback from the committee chair and other committee members. Neither the committee chair nor committee members shall read a draft of the proposal or reading list before they are handed in. However, it is appropriate for the student to consult with the committee chair about the scope of the proposal.

Within two weeks of receiving the candidacy proposal, each committee member will provide written comments/suggestions to help the student successfully develop the longer candidacy paper (e.g., suggestions for articles/literatures to include, ideas to develop, gaps and future directions to consider, etc.). Comments should be sent to the committee chair via email. Non-anonymized comments will be collated and emailed to the student by the committee chair within 24 hours. In cases where discrepant comments/suggestions are given, the committee chair will direct the student how to address them. The Graduate Coordinator and all committee members should be copied on this message.

**Step 3: Candidacy Paper:** The required length of the final candidacy paper is 9,000 words maximum, excluding references and any tables or figures. The document should be double-spaced with a 12-point font and one-inch margins.

The purpose of the paper is to provide the student with the opportunity to develop expertise in their primary area. The topic should be narrower than an entire program area but broader than a specific research project. As mentioned above, the candidacy paper should provide an in-depth critical analysis of the literature on a substantive topic through summary, analysis, comparison, synthesis, etc. The student should strive to organize, evaluate, and synthesize a body of literature in a manner that identifies larger patterns and trends. The final section of the paper should, based on the literature covered, highlight what we do not know that we should know (i.e., what are the gaps) and what research needs to be done to advance our understanding of the topic (i.e., the student must identify some specific directions for future research).

It is expected that the student will work independently to incorporate the comments/suggestions that committee members provided in response to the earlier Step 2 candidacy proposal/reading list, but the student may meet with individual committee members to seek clarification on specific points.

The candidacy paper must not depart substantially from the candidacy proposal. If the committee determines that the paper is substantially different than the proposal, this counts as a failed attempt, and the student will need to redo the paper to make it consistent with the original proposal and comments/suggestions received.
Within two weeks of receiving the candidacy paper, each committee member will evaluate the paper by providing a pass/fail judgement along with supporting comments. Evaluations should be sent to the committee chair via email. A vote of 2/3 is required for a pass.

The committee chair should notify the student of the overall outcome by email within 24 hours and append the non-anonymized pass/fail judgements and supporting comments from each committee member. The Graduate Coordinator and all committee members should be copied on this message.

If the student passes Step 3, the committee chair should then complete the **Report of Candidacy Examination form** (available on the [Forms & Resources](#) page), indicating the “pass” result, and route it as instructed on the form. Additionally, *if the student unanimously passes the first attempt, the committee chair should poll the committee via email to pass the student “with distinction.”* In order to pass with distinction, all three committee members must vote “Yes.” If the vote passes, the student, committee, and Graduate Coordinator should be notified via email.

If the student does *not* pass Step 3 (i.e., more than one “fail” vote), the student should proceed by making fundamental revisions/changes suggested by the committee and resubmit the candidacy paper within nine weeks.

After receiving the revision, committee members should provide a re-evaluation (including pass/fail judgement and supporting comments) to the committee chair within two weeks of receiving the revised paper. Again, a vote of 2/3 is required for a pass.

The committee chair should notify the student of the overall outcome by email within 24 hours and append the non-anonymized pass/fail judgements and supporting comments from each committee member. The Graduate Coordinator and all committee members should be copied on this message.

If the student passes the **second attempt** at Step 3 (i.e., at least two out of three passing votes), the committee chair should then complete the **Report of Candidacy Examination form** (available on the [Forms & Resources](#) page), indicating the “pass” result, and route it as instructed on the form.

If the student does *not* pass the **second attempt** at Step 3 (i.e., more than one “fail” vote), the committee chair should then complete the **Report of Candidacy Examination form** (available on the [Forms & Resources](#) page), indicating the “fail” result, and route it as instructed on the form. Additionally, because the student has received more than one “fail” outcome, a dismissal recommendation to the Department Chair will be forthcoming from the Graduate Education Committee. The Graduate Coordinator should make the student aware of this.
Timeline

Below is the semester-long timeline for the Advancement to Candidacy process once it is begun, which should be in the spring of Year 3:

**Beginning of the First Week:** Complete the Coursework Approval Form and Candidacy Committee Form (available on the [Forms & Resources](#) page) and submit them to the Graduate Coordinator via email.

**End of the Third Week:** Submit the Step 2 candidacy proposal to the committee chair.

**End of the Fifth Week:** The committee chair will distribute committee comments/suggestions to the student.

**End of the Twelfth Week:** The Step 3 candidacy paper is submitted to the committee chair.

**End of the Fourteenth Week:** Student is notified of the outcome and receives paper evaluations.

**Responsibilities and Expectations**

As a student, you are expected to:

1. Identify your candidacy committee chair and additional members.
2. Ensure that all coursework requirements have been met.
3. Follow the proposed timeline.
4. Work independently on all aspects of the process. While you may seek general advice from your candidacy committee chair and clarification from any committee member, you should not expect anyone on the committee to read and provide comments on drafts.

The committee chair is expected to:

1. Advise the student throughout the process, as they may have questions regarding the development of both the proposal and the paper. However, you are *not* expected to read and comment on drafts of the proposal or paper.
2. Coordinate the candidacy process with the other members of the committee.
3. Communicate with the student, committee members, and Graduate Coordinator in a timely fashion, as directed above.
4. Ensure that the Report of Candidacy Examination form is submitted to the Graduate Secretary when the student successfully or unsuccessfully completes the entire process.

Committee members are expected to:

1. Read and comment on the proposal and paper in a timely manner.
2. Provide the student with clarification of feedback, if requested. However, you are *not* expected to read and comment on drafts of the proposal or paper.
3. Adhere to the committee chair’s decisions for resolving discrepant feedback.
THE DISSERTATION

Each doctoral candidate must complete a dissertation demonstrating his or her ability to conduct scholarly research. This dissertation should be an original contribution to the field of sociology. The dissertation work is formally begun upon completion of all course work and the comprehensive examinations.

Dissertation Director

The dissertation director may be from either department of the joint program and does not have to be the same person who advised the student earlier in the program. If necessary, the Declaration or Change of Advisor Form should be completed and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. The form is available on the Forms & Resources page. Whether the advisor is new or not, the only restrictions are that the dissertation director must be a full-time faculty member of the joint program in sociology, and either have graduate faculty status in Category II at The University of Akron or be approved for dissertation direction at Kent State University with an F-4 graduate faculty status. If a student chooses to select a dissertation advisor who is from the other university, then a member of the committee from the student’s home university will be responsible for the administrative details associated with completion of the dissertation. The dissertation process will follow the guidelines of the university at which the student is administratively based in regard to formatting and completion deadlines.

Dissertation Committee

The selection of the dissertation committee members is made jointly by the student and dissertation director. The members of this committee approve the dissertation proposal, work closely with the student as the dissertation progresses, and serve on the final oral defense examining committee.

All dissertation committees shall have at least 5 committee members, including a member from outside the joint sociology program. A majority of the committee membership must have a status on the graduate faculty that allows them to direct doctoral dissertations (i.e., Category II or F-4). In addition, a majority of the committee members (including the director) must be from the joint program in sociology.

One member of the committee must be from a department other than sociology at the student’s home university – this member must also hold Category II (UA) or F-4 (KSU) graduate faculty status. This member ought to be selected so as to be maximally beneficial to the student in the design and conduct of the research, providing a perspective from a related discipline.

Dissertation committees may include other graduate faculty members but these minimum requirements must be met. The dissertation committee should be formed as soon as possible after the dissertation director is selected. The intent is that the committee will have full input into the dissertation project as it is being planned and initiated, not after it has been substantially completed. At the University of Akron, once the committee is formed (including the outside member) the student must notify the Graduate Coordinator or Director, in writing, of the committee’s composition and the title of the dissertation proposal (see the forms page on UA’s departmental website). The committee composition must also be submitted to and approved by the UA graduate school. At The University of Akron, this committee notification must be submitted and approved no later than 3 months prior to the dissertation defense. In other words, the dissertation defense may not take place until at least three months after the form is
filed. Failure to file the form three months prior will, therefore result in a delay of a student’s defense and, potentially, commencement.)

The outside member of the committee shall function as a regular member of the committee, attending all meetings and receiving preliminary drafts or chapters as do other committee members. The outside member of the committee is usually someone who may provide additional expertise to the dissertation research from a related field and is also someone who assures that the dissertation process is conducted fairly and that quality standards are maintained.

The schedules of all committee members, including the outside member, shall be considered when selecting a time for all committee meetings, including the final dissertation defense.

**Dissertation Proposal**

A dissertation proposal is to be prepared by the student and approved by the dissertation committee. The proposal meeting should occur no later than the semester prior to the thesis defense. Further, the research proposal must be approved by the Institutional Review Board of the student’s home university prior to the initiation of data collection or analysis.

The details of the proposal are to be determined by the dissertation director and committee but would typically include:

1. Identification and explanation of the general problem or issue to be investigated.
2. A brief review of the literature.
3. A listing of the research questions or hypotheses to be investigated.
4. A brief explanation of the major concepts and/or variables involved and their operationalization.
5. The design, methodology and analytic techniques to be used.

A meeting will be held with all committee members and the student to approve or disapprove of the proposal. This meeting must take place within no less than 10 days, and no more than three weeks of the committee receiving the completed document. The proposal can be approved or returned to the student for further revision.

Approval of the proposal will be indicated by the signature of each member of the committee on the Approval of Dissertation Topic form (see instructions on the [Forms & Resources](https://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-faculty-representative) page), a copy of which will be kept on file in the department office. All committee members reserve the right to withhold their signatory approval until all changes to the proposal have been made and are deemed satisfactory.

**Examination and Oral Defense of the Dissertation**

When the dissertation is completed, the student’s advisor should submit a request for a Graduate Faculty Representative. Instructions for doing so are available here: [https://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-faculty-representative](https://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-faculty-representative). Once the appointment is made (KSU), a printed copy of the dissertation in final form must then be submitted to each committee member and the Graduate Faculty Representative (at KSU) for their evaluation. At their request, some committee members may request electronic copies rather than printed copies. The dissertation director should
then schedule a preliminary meeting of the committee, known as the pre-oral, to decide if the
dissertation is ready for defense. If the dissertation committee and the (KSU) Graduate Faculty
Representative judge the dissertation ready for defense, a date and time for the defense will be
established. The oral defense date must be no less than 10 days (but preferably two weeks) after the
pre-oral meeting. The dissertation director must inform the student of the result of the pre-oral and any
changes that may have been requested to be made to the document prior to the oral defense. The
director will also inform the student as to whether a new written version of the dissertation is to be
submitted to the committee prior to the oral defense. If so, such written work should be given to the
committee at least 10 days prior to the oral defense date so that the committee members have a chance
to review the document.

Notification of the dissertation defense must be sent to all members of the joint program in sociology.
This notification must include dissertation title, date, time, place and an invitation to attend (but not
vote). This notification should occur at least 10 days prior to the scheduled defense. A template for the
announcement is available on the Forms & Resources page. At the oral defense, the committee and
outside Graduate Faculty Representative (at KSU) will examine the student on all relevant and pertinent
aspects of the dissertation.

The committee may reject the dissertation document, require major or minor changes, or accept the
dissertation. At the end of the oral defense, all committee members will be polled for their vote on the
oral defense (pass or fail). A maximum of one “fail” vote is allowed for the student to pass. More than
one “fail” vote constitutes failure for the student. A failed dissertation defense may not be repeated. If
further changes to the dissertation document are necessary, they should be made as quickly as possible.
All committee members reserve the right to withhold their signatory approval until all changes have
been made and are deemed satisfactory.

All committee members will affix their signatures to a single form signifying their vote (see the Forms &
Resources page on departmental website). The completed form should be routed as instructed,
indicating that the defense has been held, and that the student has passed or failed. All appropriate
forms must be on file in the Graduate School at the appropriate times. It is the responsibility of the
student to know which forms must be completed and filed, and at what times.

**Dissertation Credits**

Students must complete at least 30 semester hours of dissertation credit. More than 30 hours may be
taken but only 30 hours will count toward the degree. These credits will be assigned to the dissertation
director.

**Final Requirements and Submission of Dissertation to the Graduate School**

Guidelines for preparing a dissertation can be found on the home university’s graduate school website.
These requirements will specify the final details of submission, including binding fees, submission fees,
and other administrative details for final submission. **It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of the deadlines set by their Graduate School for graduation.** The deadline to apply for graduation is early in the semester you plan to graduate (see [http://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-deadlines](http://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-deadlines)).
Awarding of the Doctoral Degree

The PhD degree will be awarded from the school at which the student is administratively based. The fact that either the dissertation director may be from the other campus does not affect where the degree is awarded. It is usually possible for a director from the other campus to attend the home university’s graduation ceremonies and to “hood” the student receiving the doctoral degree.
POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious breach of professional ethics. To ensure that students understand plagiarism, in all its forms, every student is required to complete the following in their first semester of the graduate program.

1. Students will complete an online CITI training which includes a section on ethics, and print the completion certificate.
2. Students will complete an online program on plagiarism, and print the documentation provided upon passing the program.

Both documents must be submitted to the graduate director of their home department for inclusion in their file. The CITI training and plagiarism tutorial will be completed as part of the requirements for Professional and Ethical Issues in Sociology course.

A single act of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the graduate program.

Procedures Concerning Plagiarism

If a faculty member suspect a student has plagiarize an assignment, the faculty member will present the students paper and a copy of the original source to the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) by submitting the materials to either the Department Chair or Graduate Program Coordinator.

All cases of suspected plagiarism will be brought to the JEC.

The JEC will assess the evidence and make the final decision as to the presence or absence of plagiarism.

The JEC will recommend appropriate disciplinary action to the Graduate Committee of the student’s campus. The Graduate Committee will then make a final recommendation as to disciplinary action. If the disciplinary action is dismissal from the graduate program, the graduate committee will notify the Graduate School and ask that the student be formally dismissed.

For more on university policy concerning plagiarism, please see: http://libguides.library.kent.edu/c.php?g=278246&p=1854288

Awards & Scholarships

Department Awards

Elaine Mai Schock Award: Awarded to an outstanding Master’s student in Sociology.
Requisites: GPA, faculty nomination, and GEC vote.
Amount of Award: $100, non-renewable.

Outstanding Doctoral Student Award: Awarded to an outstanding Doctoral student in Sociology
Requisites: GPA, faculty nomination, and final GEC vote.
Amount of Award: $100, non-renewable.
James E. Fleming Memorial Award: Awarded to author of the best paper in sociological theory.
Requisites: GPA, faculty nomination, and final faculty vote.
Amount of Award: $100, non-renewable
Available to: undergraduate of any rank, graduate

James T. Laing Scholarship in Sociology: Awarded to a graduate student in good academic standing, who is not graduating, and who has taken an active and engaged role in the department or discipline.
Amount of Award: $1,000 to be awarded the following Fall semester. Number of awards may vary from year to year.

Lewis-Benson Outstanding Graduate Instructor Award: Awarded to a graduate student who has demonstrated teaching excellence in at least one course taught independently. A student may only win this award once.

University Awards & Scholarships
For information on awards and scholarships submitted at the Graduate College level, see the links below or ask the Graduate Coordinator for more information:

- University Fellowship.
  For eligibility criteria and the nomination form, visit [http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/university-fellowship](http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/university-fellowship).
- Jeanette and Louis Reuter Fellowship in Developmental Science.
  For eligibility criteria and the nomination form, visit [http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/reuter-fellowship](http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/reuter-fellowship).
- David B. Smith Award.
  For eligibility criteria and the nomination form, visit [http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/smith-award](http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/smith-award).
- Lillian Friedman Award.
  For eligibility criteria and the nomination form, visit [http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/friedman-award](http://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/friedman-award).

Emergencies
Each department has an emergency evacuation plan. Please consult with other graduate students and faculty to learn details regarding this plan (e.g., where to evacuate from your office space in the event of an emergency). The most common emergencies are tornados or a gas link. Merrill Hall has two rally points in the event of an emergency. These are the stone library gardens (rally point 1) and Hilltop Drive in front of Cartwright Hall (rally point 2). For additional information on the university’s response plan and dealing with difficult or troubled students, please see the website for further information:

[http://www.kent.edu/stepupspeakout](http://www.kent.edu/stepupspeakout)
APPENDIX A: MA THESIS PROPOSAL – SUGGESTED OUTLINE & GUIDELINES

This suggested outline is intended as an aid for the student and his or her thesis advisor in preparing the thesis proposal. The nature of the problem to be investigated and the procedure to be used in the investigation will result in differential emphases and details on the various outline sections. These should be worked out in consultation with your advisor.

I. Introduction and Statement of problem
   A. State the general problem/question to be investigated.
   B. Introduce the reader to the main goals and contributions of your proposed project.

II. Literature Review
    Review theoretical and substantive literature related to your topic. This section should be guided by your general research question(s) and cover the literature relevant to answer that/those questions. In this section, most authors introduce a “guiding” theoretical framework, which may also help to better specification of your final research questions, hypotheses, and analytic approach.

III. Research Questions and hypotheses
    State your specific research questions/hypotheses that emerge from the preceding literature review.

IV. Methods
    Identify and explain the data and measures that you will use to investigate your research questions/hypotheses. The particular research methods employed depends on the nature of the problem and/or the state of knowledge in the area. This should be worked out in consultation with your advisor.

V. Data Analysis
    Indicate your analytic strategy – i.e., how you will evaluate your data in relation to your research questions/hypotheses.

V. Conclusion
    Restate the importance of your proposed project and the contributions that completing the project will make to the relevant literature(s).
APPENDIX B: REQUIRED PAPERWORK OVERVIEW
(Forms or links to forms are provided on the Forms & Resources page)

1st Year
Notice of Matriculation/Change in Prog. of Study  Due: Start of semester if you enter without an MA
Declaration of Advisor Form  Due: End of fall semester
Plan of Study & Vita  Due: End of spring semester

2nd Year
Approval of Thesis Topic  Due: End of fall semester
Note: must be submitted the semester before graduation.

Defend Thesis:
Apply for graduation (online). The very latest to do this is early in the semester you plan to graduate (see http://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-deadlines). Ideally it should be done the semester before you plan to graduate.
Thesis Defense Announcement
Report of Thesis Final Examination
Signature Page (two copies on >50% bond paper; see the Style Guide and Instructions for Preparing Dissertations and Theses)

3rd Year
Coursework Approval Form  Due: Final semester of coursework (spring of 3rd year)
Candidacy Committee Form  Due: Start of the 1st week of the semester (spring of 3rd year)
Report of Candidacy Examination  Filled out at the end of the advancement to candidacy process. Due: After the student successfully or unsuccessfully completed the entire process.

4th Year
Approval of Dissertation Topic  Due: End of fall semester
Note: cannot be submitted the same semester as graduation.

5th Year
Defend Dissertation:
Apply for graduation (online). The very latest to do this is early in the semester you plan to graduate (see http://www.kent.edu/cas/graduate-deadlines). Ideally it should be done the semester before you plan to graduate.
Dissertation Defense Announcement  Due: At least 10 days prior to scheduled defense
Report of Dissertation Final Examination
Signature Page (two copies on >50% bond paper; see the Style Guide and Instructions for Preparing Dissertations and Theses)