

## How to Succeed in the M.A. Program in Sociology

This document describes basic procedures and norms for progressing through the M.A. program in Sociology at the University of New Orleans. Read this carefully, and if you have any questions, raise them with the Graduate Coordinator and/or your major professor. These materials are not intended to replace the graduate catalog, only to supplement it. Discussed below are course requirements for the various degree options, required forms for the M.A. degree, some procedures, and a time frame for the entire process.

### Three M.A. Degree Options Available in Sociology

There are three options that lead to the Master of Arts degree in Sociology: (1) thesis option, (2) non-thesis option, and (3) applied option.

#### **The Thesis Option (30 hours total)**

In addition to completing 30 hours of required coursework, those who pursue the thesis option also design, conduct, and write an M.A. thesis under the guidance of a faculty advisor and two additional faculty, at least two of whom must be selected from the graduate faculty of the University of New Orleans Sociology Department. Students who pursue the thesis option must complete three credits of thesis work (SOC 7000) but may not apply more than six credits of Sociology 7000 toward the degree. Upon completion of the thesis, students must defend their work in an oral examination before a thesis committee composed of the advisor and two additional committee members. Permission to select the Thesis Option is based on performance in graduate courses during the first year of study and granted by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the Graduate Committee.

#### **The Non-Thesis Option (36 hours total)**

Non-thesis students must complete a total of 36 hours for the M.A. degree. In addition to completing the courses required of all M.A. students, those who pursue the non-thesis option must complete Sociology 6788, Qualitative Methods, offered in Spring semesters only. Non-thesis students must also complete a total of 21 hours of course work numbered 6000 or above. Three credits of independent study work (SOC 6396, 6397, 6398) may be counted toward the 21 hours and only three hours of independent study can count toward the 36 total hours required for the non-thesis degree. The research proposal submitted by non-thesis students in Sociology 6785 (Research Applications) will be read by the faculty instructor and an additional member of the department; successful completion of this course is necessary for graduation.

#### **The Applied Option (30 hours total)**

In addition to completing courses required of all M.A. students, those who pursue the applied option must also complete six credits of thesis work (Sociology 7000). In addition to required course work, students who pursue the applied option will complete an applied M.A. thesis. Program implementation, program evaluation, and policy impact assessment are three of the more common approaches taken in the applied thesis. The thesis demonstrates a student's ability to apply sociological insights and research skills in applied settings. A faculty advisor will supervise preparation of the thesis. Students will present their thesis orally to a faculty committee composed of the advisor and two additional faculty members.

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### Required Courses for All M.A. Students (12 - 15 Hours)

**SOC 4086G: Sociological Theory (3 hrs.)** – Usually taught each fall in the evening. This is required only if the student does not have an undergraduate social theory course. Make requests for exceptions to the Graduate Coordinator.

**SOC 4788G: Social Statistics (3 hrs.)** - Usually offered spring semester each year. The course involves computer use. It is strongly recommended that students have an introductory statistics course (e.g. SOC 2707) before they take SOC 4788G.

**SOC 6783: Advanced Sociological Theory (3 hrs.)** - Usually offered spring semester each year.

**SOC 6784: Methods of Sociological Investigation (3 hrs.)** - Usually offered fall semester each year. The course requires use of the computer; the computer competency requirement for the M.A. degree is satisfied by passing the course with a grade of 'B' or better. When students finish the course they should ask the Graduate Coordinator to submit the computer competency form to the graduate school.

**SOC 6785: Seminar in Research Applications (3 hrs.)** - Usually taught each fall semester for students who have completed SOC 4788G, SOC 6783, and SOC 6784. Students who want to take SOC 6785 before completion of the prerequisites must receive consent of the graduate committee. The course provides training in advanced research design and involves the application of research skills as each student prepares a proposal for a Master's Thesis.

### Graduate Seminars

All students must complete at least one graduate seminar in Sociology. Most semesters, two graduate seminars are offered in the evening. The graduate seminars listed below are offered on a rotating basis. NOTE: The program requires that **all** students complete at least one 6000-level graduate seminar in Sociology (excluding independent study hours).

SOC 6103 Race and Ethnicity  
SOC 6105 Complex Organization and Bureaucracy  
SOC 6107 Sociological Perspectives on Gender SOC  
6573 Social Psychology  
SOC 6788 Qualitative Methods  
SOC 6813 Urban Sociology  
SOC 6814 Sociology of Development  
SOC 6816 Sexualities  
SOC 6871 Environmental Analysis

Courses outside the Sociology Department may also be taken when they are relevant to a student's particular substantive interests and are approved by the Graduate Coordinator or the student's thesis Chair. However, no more than 6 hours in course work from other departments can be counted toward the M.A. degree in Sociology.

### Other Courses

All 4000-level courses taught by graduate faculty are available for graduate credit, as long as the student has not taken the course as an undergraduate. If the student *has* taken the undergraduate version, approval from the 6000 level course instructor must be obtained. We strongly urge graduate students to take the 6000 level version of a 4000G course whenever possible (e.g. 6107

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instead of 4107G). Graduate students in 4000-level courses are required to complete work beyond that expected of undergraduates, and performance commensurate with the awarding of graduate credit is expected. Be sure to sign up for the graduate section of the course (4000G).

### **Independent Study: SOC 6396, 6397, 6398 (3 hrs. each)**

A student may request an independent study when courses are not available in a particular area of student interest and a graduate faculty member is willing to direct it. The semester before the independent study is initiated; the student and faculty member should prepare a reading list. No more than 6 hours of independent study can be counted toward the M.A. degree and only 3 hours may be counted toward the non-thesis degree option.

### **Thesis Hours: SOC 7000 (3+ hrs)**

Students can sign up for Thesis Hours when working directly on their M.A. thesis research under the direction of their Thesis Chair. Students choosing the thesis option must have at least 3 thesis hours; only 6 thesis hours can count toward the 30 hr. course requirement.

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### Scheduling Plan for Students Who Pursue the Thesis Option

This scheduling plan is highly recommended. The sequence is designed both pedagogically to support your development through the program, and logistically to ensure the greatest likelihood that you will be able to take all of the required coursework.

#### First Year, Fall (6-9 hrs)

- SOC 4086G - Sociological Theory (if needed)
- SOC 2707 – Social Statistics I (if needed)
- SOC 6784 - Methods of Sociological Investigation
- Graduate Seminar or 4000G undergraduate course

#### First Year, Spring (6-9 hrs)

- SOC 6783 - Advanced Sociological Theory
- SOC 4788G - Intermediate Statistics
- Graduate Seminar or 4000G undergraduate course

#### End of Second Semester (Usually Late Spring) (18 hrs completed)

- Discuss selection of thesis/non-thesis option preference with Graduate Coordinator. Permission to pursue thesis option based on approval by Graduate Coordinator in consultation with faculty instructors and the Graduate Committee. If thesis option is approved, recruit Chair of thesis committee and submit name to Graduate Coordinator
- Design summer research program in conjunction with Thesis Chair
- File M.A. Candidate Plan of Study Form

#### First Year, Summer

- 4000G undergraduate course or Independent Study (3 hrs)
- Thesis preparation (usually reading toward literature review, shaping research topic, and/or identifying research site) in conjunction with Thesis Chair

#### Second Year, Fall (6 - 9 hrs)

- SOC 6785 - Seminar in Research Applications
- Graduate Seminar or 4000G undergraduate course
- SOC 7000 - Thesis Hours
- Select second and third members of your committee

#### Second Year, Spring (6-9 hrs)

- SOC 7000 – Thesis Hours
- Prepare thesis timeline with Thesis Chair and submit to entire committee
- Prepare first draft of thesis by February 15th for spring defense

#### Summer

- SOC 7000 - Thesis hours as necessary to complete thesis

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### Financial Aid

The department offers several graduate assistant positions which pay approximately \$5,155 for a nine-month appointment and cover tuition. The student is responsible for fees. Graduate Assistants also qualify for a 10% discount at the bookstore and a graduate assistant parking decal. Graduate Assistants are required to take 9 hours each fall and spring semester. Students who enter the program without an assistantship may apply in subsequent semesters and be appointed as Graduate Assistants. Many departments on campus also employ students in part-time jobs. Students interested in part-time employment or student loans should contact the Financial Aid Office.

### Selecting a Thesis Chair

Normally, at the end of the second semester the student selects either the thesis or non-thesis option in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator. Once the selection is approved, the student approaches a graduate faculty member within the department and asks him/her to be the Chair. The student, in consultation with the Thesis Chair, then selects at least two additional committee members (one may be from another department or even another university). Students must have a Chair before signing up for thesis hours (SOC 7000). Three hours of thesis credit (SOC 7000) are required for the degree if the student chooses a thesis option. Additional thesis hours may be taken as needed, but only 6 hours of thesis credit can be counted toward the 30 hours required for the M.A. degree.

### Final Oral Examination

When the final draft of the thesis or applied report is complete, the date for an oral examination should be selected (NOTE: be sure to check the Graduate School website for thesis defense deadlines—they usually come *about a month before* the end of the semester). The student should notify the Graduate Coordinator two weeks before the defense date and provide the name of the thesis and time and location of the defense. The entire Sociology department is notified and invited. The final draft of the thesis or applied report is made available for review in the department office at least one week prior to the exam date. Modifications to the thesis can be made during this time, but a copy of the thesis must be available for faculty to read.

### Final Copy of Thesis or Applied Report

After the Master's oral exam, students must obtain signatures of examining committee members on the Thesis Approval Form, and this form must be submitted to the Graduate School. The final thesis or applied report must be submitted to the Graduate School in electronic format before the semester deadline (see Graduate School web-site for dates). Guidelines for preparation of the final thesis are also available on the Graduate School web site. There are two important dates: the first is for a thesis to be electronically format checked; the second is when the final electronic copy must be transmitted to the Graduate School, which normally occurs approximately one week after the final oral exam deadline.

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### Forms for M.A. Students to File

**Certification of Foreign Language/Computer Competency:** Upon satisfactory completion of graduate methods (SOC 6784) students should ask the Graduate Coordinator to file this form with the Graduate School.

**Candidate Plan of Study:** When at least 15 hours of course work are completed and a major professor and committee are selected, the student prepares this form (usually at the end of the first year of study). The form lists all courses taken, names the major professor, states the degree option the student intends to pursue, and states in which semester the student expects to graduate. Two copies of the form are signed by the major professor, Graduate Coordinator, Department Chair, and Graduate Dean. This form must be completed at least one semester before graduation.  
<http://registrar.uno.edu>

**Application for Degree:** This form must be filed the semester before you graduate. For fall graduates, this means some time in August. It is filled out and submitted online.  
<http://registrar.uno.edu>

**Format Check:** Create an account on ScholarWorks on the Library website. Thesis option only.  
<http://scholarworks.uno.edu>

**Thesis and Dissertation Approval Form:** Three copies of this form should be brought to the oral defense. Once the entire M.A. thesis committee has signed them, copies are sent to the Graduate School. Thesis option only.  
<http://www.uno.edu/grad/Forms#due>

**Final Thesis Submission:** Log back into ScholarWorks on the Library website:  
<http://scholarworks.uno.edu>. Thesis option only.

**Non-Thesis Master's Report:** To be filed online the month before graduation. Non-thesis option only.

### Graduation

Students must submit the Application for Degree form the semester before they intend to graduate, and pay a graduation fee when they register for their final semester. The Candidate Plan of Study Form should be approved by this point, but if it has not yet been approved, it is not too late to file the form. If for some reason the student is unable to graduate that semester, the next semester the student is enrolled a nominal diploma remake fee is assessed.

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### **Strategic Tips for the Last Semester**

- Check the Graduate School website for “Important Dates.” Be sure to meet all deadlines, leaving time to get faculty signatures on forms.
- In particular, check the final date for a Master’s Exam for the semester you plan to graduate and work backwards to determine when you need to complete a draft of the thesis. Also double check the final thesis submission deadline in order to ensure you have enough time for final thesis revisions.
- Most thesis committees read at least two full drafts of each thesis. Allow your committee members two to three weeks to read each draft. In other words, if the Master’s Exam deadline is November 20<sup>th</sup>, the committee members should receive the first draft of the thesis around October 6th [giving them two weeks to read and you two weeks to revise] and a second defensible draft of the thesis before November 6th.
- For further information or clarification, contact the Graduate Coordinator or your major professor.

**The Graduate Faculty wish you a positive experience in the Program, and encourage you to ask for help if you have any questions or concerns.**