

Department of Sociology

Graduate Program Handbook

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Western
SocialScience

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Welcome

Welcome to the Sociology Graduate Program! We are thrilled that you have decided to join us and pursue your graduate training in sociology at Western. We are a dedicated and vibrant group of faculty and students committed to the study of social inequality and population dynamics using a wide range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

This handbook is intended to lay out the policies and procedures of our Graduate Program and direct you to additional helpful resources. In particular, you will want to familiarize yourself with the **School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies** (SGPS) and their requirements and regulations (available [here](#)).

Please note that the policies and procedures contained in this handbook reflect the state of the program as incoming cohorts of students begin. During the time you are enrolled, the Department may make minor changes (to clarify existing policies or procedures) or more substantial changes to the program (following consultation with the Graduate Committee, other faculty in our department, and SGPS). Substantial changes like new program requirements will apply beginning with the cohort of students entering in the following year.

If you have any questions that are not answered in this handbook or elsewhere on our webpage, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Graduate Program Assistant or the Graduate Chair. In addition, you will be expected to take the initiative for your own graduate school experience by working with your supervisor and other mentors to decide how you will develop and apply your substantive, theoretical, and methodological skills in our program and beyond.

Best of luck!

Program Contacts

Graduate Chair: soc-grad-chair@uwo.ca

Graduate Program Assistant: soc-grad-assistant@uwo.ca

MA Program

At the master's level, we offer a one-year (three-term) **research paper stream**, in which students combine coursework with a research writing practicum and the completion of an original research paper on a topic of their choosing. We also offer a two-year (six-term) **thesis stream**, in which students develop a longer, more in-depth piece of original research.

All MA students are admitted initially into the research paper stream. Those students interested in the thesis stream can apply into the two-year program during their first term (see Admissions under the MA Thesis Stream section of this Handbook).

Supervision & Mentorship

All incoming MA students are assigned a **Temporary Faculty Mentor** (TFM) over the summer prior to starting in the fall. Students are matched to a mentor based in part on students' interests as expressed in their applications. While this faculty member need not necessarily become the students' supervisor, the goal of the TFM program is to match students with someone right away who can ease their transition to graduate school, help with the selection of courses, talk through their questions and research interests, and introduce them to potential supervisors. Students should meet with their Temporary Faculty Mentor at least once in the initial two weeks of the program and a few more times throughout their first term.

All MA students are expected to select their permanent supervisor by **October 31** of their first term in the program by submitting the **MA Supervisor Form** to the Graduate Program Assistant. To serve as an MA supervisor, a faculty member must be a member of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and a member of the main campus Sociology Department at Western.

It is the student's prerogative to change supervisors. In that case, a new supervisor form must be completed and submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant. In the event of an impasse between the student or supervisor, the Graduate Chair will adjudicate and determine an appropriate course of action. Either the student or the supervisor may bring such a matter to the attention of the Graduate Chair.

Courses

Regardless of stream, MA students are required to complete a minimum of six (6) half-courses. Students generally take 3 courses in the fall term and 3 courses in the winter term.

Students must complete the following 3 mandatory courses, in addition to a minimum of 3 electives:

- 1) Sociology 9003: Research Design
- 2) Sociology 9001: Introduction to Statistical Analysis
- 3) *Either* Sociology 9002: Sociological Perspectives *or* Sociology 9005: Contemporary Social Theory

In addition to these 6 courses, students will be required to participate in sessions designed to meet the requirements of the **MA Sociological Research Practicum** milestone during the winter term of their first year. MA students are also encouraged to attend sessions of the **PhD Professionalization Seminar** (ProSem) that are relevant to them.

A minimum of 5 of the 6 required courses must be selected from the graduate courses offered by the Department of Sociology. Students may take 1 graduate course offered in another department or interdisciplinary program. Students can explore the possibilities for externally-offered courses available [here](#), or check with their collaborative specializations for specific course requirements ([Migration and Ethnic Relations](#) or [Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Resolution](#)). Approval to take a course outside of our department must be granted by the Graduate Chair; students should submit this [Request Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

In exceptional circumstances, permission to take a Reading Course may be granted at the discretion of the Graduate Chair. For instance, there is no course being offered in the student's area of study (broadly, rather than narrowly defined) in a given year (not a given term), or a student wishes to take additional courses beyond those that are required. Normally, students will be permitted to take a maximum of one (1) reading course during their MA program. Students should work with their supervisors and/or proposed reading course instructor to submit this [Reading Course Proposal Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

MA Research Paper Stream

In addition to coursework, students in the one-year stream complete a **Master's Research Paper** (MRP) over three terms (fall, winter, summer).

Students develop and work on their MRP under the close supervision of a faculty member (i.e., their supervisor). The MRP should be about the length of a journal article—that is, roughly 30-45 pages, including a title page, abstract, tables, figures, and references. The typical MRP is an original empirical analysis of existing data.

However, other formats are acceptable, including theoretical or systematic review articles. Students are encouraged to examine recent issues of sociological journals (including general interest and area-specific empirical and theoretically oriented journals as well as the *Annual Review of Sociology*) for models of what their MRPs could look like. A template of the MRP is available on the Graduate Intranet.

Students email their final version of the MRP to their supervisor and the Graduate Program Assistant at any time during the summer term, but no later than **August 15**. The MRP is subject to a textual similarity review for the detection of plagiarism; the Graduate Program Assistant runs the MRP through Turnitin (or similar software) upon the student's submission of their final version. The supervisor marks the work before **August 30** and sends the mark to the student and the Graduate Program Assistant. The marking is similar to other graduate courses, and passing means obtaining a mark of **at least 60%**. The student's MRP mark is displayed on their transcript.

Students must also apply to graduate, ideally at the beginning of their completion term, via the Student Centre (student.uwo.ca). This process allows students to confirm how they would like their name to appear on their diplomas.

Students who wish to publish their thesis online in the [Scholarship@Western](#) repository must talk with and secure explicit permission (via an email, sent to the student with the Graduate Chair and Graduate Program Assistant copied) from their supervisor.

Summary of MA Research Paper Stream Requirements

	MA Research Paper Stream
Minimum number of courses	6 half-courses
Mandatory courses	9003: Research Design 9001: Introduction to Statistical Analysis 9002: Sociological Perspectives <i>or</i> 9005: Contemporary Social Theory
Additional requirements	MA Sociological Research Practicum MA Research Paper
Expected duration	3 terms (fall, winter, summer)

MA Thesis Stream

Admissions

Students interested in the two-year (six-term) **MA Thesis Stream** should meet with their supervisor early in their first term to discuss their research. Students should then submit a preliminary thesis proposal (approximately 2-5 pages) to the Graduate Chair and Graduate Program Assistant that outlines their research project, their anticipated

timeline, and the appropriateness of their project for the two-year program. Students applying to the MA Thesis Stream must also apply for external funding for their second year—in particular, the Canada Graduate Scholarships – Master’s Program (CGSM). Both the proposal and the CGSM application are due on **December 1**.

The Graduate Chair and Graduate Committee will review and adjudicate students’ proposals. The Graduate Chair will communicate the Committee’s decision to students and their supervisors, normally by the end of the fall term. Students who are accepted into the two-year MA Thesis Stream will fill out the [MA Transfer Form](#).

MA Thesis Supervisory Committee

In addition to the students’ supervisor, students in the MA Thesis Stream must select a **supervisory committee member**. The expectation is that the supervisory committee member will serve as a “reader,” providing feedback beginning at the proposal stage and throughout the writing process, and that they will read the thesis in its entirety before preliminary submission. The student must select their supervisory committee member by the time that they write their thesis proposal.

MA Thesis Proposal

Students in this stream are required to write a thesis proposal, normally in the third term of their first year in the program, under the supervision of their supervisor. Students should build off the preliminary proposal they submitted to apply into this stream.

The thesis proposal is a milestone of our program and requires the following:

- 1) The selection of a supervisor and supervisory committee member.
- 2) Approval of the proposal by both the supervisor and the supervisory committee member.
- 3) Completion of the proposal by the end of the students third term in residence.
- 4) Completion of the [Thesis Proposal Report](#).

The content and structure of the proposal should be developed in consultation with the supervisor. Please consult the following resources:

- 1) The [MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines](#) provide details such as what should be included and what questions to consider in the preparation of one’s proposal. A

proposal typically includes the research questions to be addressed, key background literature, the data and methods, and expected contributions.

- 2) Students planning to conduct research involving human participants (e.g., an original survey, participant observation, interviews, focus groups) need to obtain approval from the University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Boards. This is not a simple process. The ethics approval process, from start to finish, can take up to 3 months, so students and their supervisors need to plan accordingly and begin early.

The submission of the Thesis Proposal Report represents a commitment by the student, supported by their supervisor, to pursue the thesis upon completion of the thesis proposal.

MA Thesis

Students may submit their MA thesis in either **monograph** or **integrated-article** format. MA theses in sociology typically range from 100 to 150 pages, and they should not be shorter than 75 pages, excluding appendices. Full information about the components required and formatting guidelines can be found in the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' Thesis Regulations.

A **monograph format MA thesis** will usually include the following chapters:

- 1) An introductory chapter that provides an overview of the thesis, and that motivates and establishes the broader significance of the topic.
- 2) A literature review chapter that sets out the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological context for the thesis.
- 3) A methods chapter that describes the data and analytical approach.
- 4) One or more chapters laying out and discussing the results.
- 5) A concluding chapter that discusses the findings within the context of the broader field of study.
- 6) A bibliography.
- 7) Appendices (only if applicable).

An **integrated-article format MA thesis** should be comprised of:

- 1) An introductory chapter that provides an overview of the thesis, that motivates and establishes the broader significance of the topic, and that lays out how the empirical chapters work together to address broad research questions.
- 2) Two empirical chapters that are structured like journal articles, in that they introduce research questions, discuss the relevant literature, describe the data and methods, present the findings, and discuss the implications of the results in a concluding section. Alternatively, students can write separate literature review and/or data/methods chapters before laying out their findings in empirical chapters that follow.
- 3) A concluding chapter that relates the separate articles to each other and integrates and discusses the findings within the context of the broader field of study.
- 4) A separate bibliography should be included at the end of each chapter or article.
- 5) Appendices (only if applicable)

A student's thesis will be subject to submission for textual similarity review through the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University (e.g., Turnitin).

MA Thesis Examination

Upon completing their MA thesis, a student must pass an **oral examination**. Unlike the PhD dissertation, a **public lecture** is optional for MA thesis students; if a student and their supervisor decide to do a public lecture, these typically occur on the same day, the examination following the public lecture. The public lecture would be open to faculty, students, and the broader public. The examination is a closed-door session with the candidate and the examination committee.

The **examination committee** typically consists of a chair (determined by SGPS), two examiners from sociology (one of which can be the Supervisory Committee Member), and a university examiner (i.e., someone from outside sociology who was not on the supervisory committee).

All examiners must be arms-length from the student and supervisor and must not have been a collaborator on the thesis research. The student and supervisory are encouraged to consider the diversity of representation on the committee (e.g., gender) when choosing from a pool of qualified examiners. Note that the university examiner is meant to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to the examination; thus, scholars from a sociology department at one of Western's affiliate colleges are not usually

acceptable. Please confer with the Graduate Chair if you have questions regarding the suitability of a potential examiner.

Once a date for the examination has been determined, submit a completed [MA Thesis Exam Request Form](#) signed by both the supervisor and student to the Graduate Program Assistant. The Graduate Chair will then request that an exam be scheduled. Please note that final approval of the examination committee is made by SGPS.

More details about the examination process can be found on [SGPS's Regulations webpage](#). SGPS also provides an in-depth guide – including forms, information about formatting, and timelines for submitting the dissertation and scheduling the examination – [here](#).

Summary of MA Thesis Stream Requirements

	MA Thesis Stream
Minimum number of courses	6 half-courses
Mandatory courses	9003: Research Design 9001: Introduction to Statistical Analysis 9002: Sociological Perspectives <i>or</i> 9005: Contemporary Social Theory
Additional requirements	MA Sociological Research Practicum MA Thesis Proposal MA Thesis MA Thesis Examination
Expected duration	6 terms

PhD Program

PhD Program Timeline & Milestones

The table below provides an example timeline for how students should move through the program. Students are encouraged to use this table, as well as the milestones and program requirements outlined in the rest of this handbook, as a tool for setting goals with their supervisor(s) and the Graduate Chair.

Year 1		
Fall	Winter	Summer
Take 3 courses Take ProSem	Take 3 courses Take ProSem Choose supervisor Choose 2 comp exams	Begin studying for 1 st comp exam
Year 2		
Fall	Winter	Summer
Take 2 courses Take 1 st comp exam Study for 2 nd comp exam	Work on proposal Take 2 nd comp exam	Work on proposal Choose supervisory committee member
Year 3		
Fall	Winter	Summer
Present proposal Work on dissertation	Work on dissertation	Work on dissertation Research apprenticeship deadline Prepare job market materials
Year 4		
Fall	Winter	Summer
Work on dissertation	Work on dissertation	Defend dissertation

Throughout students' time in the program (beginning as early as winter in their first year, and certainly by their second year), they should submit their research to academic conferences and journals.

Supervision & Mentorship

By the **end of the first year** in the program, students must choose their **supervisor**. To serve as a supervisor, a faculty member must be a member of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) and be approved to supervise PhD dissertations. The faculty member must also be a member of the Sociology Department at Western's main campus. The student and their supervisor(s) complete and submit

Part A of the [PhD Supervisory Committee & Thesis Proposal Milestone Report](#) by the end of year 1.

Students and supervisors should consult the [SGPS Graduate Supervision Handbook](#) for advice on navigating the supervisor-graduate student relationship.

Students should be in frequent and regular communication with their supervisor(s). At a minimum, in September of each year, students are expected to develop a plan with their supervisor(s) and with the Graduate Chair indicating how and when they will meet the requirements of their program. This plan includes timing for all coursework and other requirements. While the Graduate Chair has the formal role of establishing the student's program of study, students are encouraged to speak to their supervisor(s) and various other faculty members for advice on courses and on their program.

In addition to the supervisor, the Doctoral Supervisory Committee also includes at least one **supervisory committee member** from our program. The expectation is that the supervisory committee member will serve as a "reader," providing feedback beginning at the proposal stage and throughout the writing process, and that they will read the dissertation in its entirety before preliminary submission. A supervisory committee member must be a [member of SGPS](#) with at least non-core limited membership status. On rare occasions, a faculty member from outside the department can be a supervisory committee member (for instance, as a subject or methodological expert, due to the requirements of a collaborative specialization, or as necessary for restricted data access). The student must select their supervisory committee member by the time that they write their dissertation proposal, typically by the **end of the second year** of the program.

It is the student's prerogative to change supervisors or supervisory committee members. In that case, a new Supervisor Form must be completed and submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant. In the event of an impasse between the student or supervisor, the Graduate Chair will adjudicate and determine an appropriate course of action. Either the student or the supervisor(s) may bring such a matter to the attention of the Graduate Chair.

Courses

PhD students are normally required to complete eight (8) half-courses. Students generally take 3 courses in the fall term of their first year, 3 courses in the winter term of their first year, and 2 courses in their second year (typically in the fall term).

Students must complete the following 3 courses, in addition to a minimum of 5 electives:

- 1) Sociology 9003: Research Design
- 2) Sociology 9007: Advanced Statistical Analysis
- 3) *Either* Sociology 9002: Sociological Perspectives *or* Sociology 9005: Contemporary Social Theory

In addition to these 8 courses, PhD students are required to participate in the **PhD Professionalization Seminar** (ProSem) during their first year in the program. The ProSem is designed to introduce students to the structure, procedures, and expectations of our department's graduate program, as well as to familiarize them with the norms of the profession more broadly. The schedule of sessions and topics will be shared with students via email prior to the start of the academic year and will be posted on the [Grad Intranet](#).

Students may take up to 2 graduate courses offered in another department or interdisciplinary program. Students can check with their collaborative specializations for specific course requirements ([Migration and Ethnic Relations](#) or [Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Resolution](#)). Approval to take a course outside of our department must be granted by the Graduate Chair; students should submit this [Request Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

In exceptional circumstances, permission to take a Reading Course may be granted at the discretion of the Graduate Chair. For instance, there is no course being offered in the student's area of study (broadly, rather than narrowly defined) in a given year (not a given term), or a student wishes to take additional courses beyond those that are required. Normally, students will be permitted to take a maximum of one (1) reading course during their PhD program. Students should work with their supervisors and/or proposed reading course instructor to submit this [Reading Course Proposal Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

A student's required course load may be reduced (by a maximum of 2 courses) in the case where a student has previously taken 9002, 9003, 9005, and 9007, or their equivalents. For example, a student who has taken one of these courses (or its equivalent) previously may have the required number of courses reduced to a minimum of seven; a student who has taken two of these courses (or their equivalents) previously may have the required number of courses reduced to a minimum of six. Note that if a student has previously taken 9002 instead of 9005 (or vice-versa), they will still be expected to take the other one. To request a course waiver, provide the Graduate Chair with a copy of the outline or syllabus for the course you have taken previously. The outline will be reviewed by the Graduate Chair and the instructor of the course in question, and your request for a waiver is subject to their approval.

Research Apprenticeship

The Research Apprenticeship Milestone consists of a minimum of 60 hours spent working closely with a faculty member on a research project (either paid work on a grant-funded project or an unpaid research collaboration). It is designed to mentor students in the research process and provide hands-on research skills in preparation for their dissertation work. This milestone should be completed in the **first or second year** of the program, and no later than the end of one's third year.

Upon completion, students should submit the [Research Apprenticeship Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Comprehensive Examinations

PhD students are required to take and pass **two comprehensive examinations**, normally in the **second year** of the program, before the completion of the dissertation proposal.

Comprehensive examinations require students to demonstrate a broad understanding of the literature, prevailing arguments, and debates within two substantive areas. The comprehensive examination process provides students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in literatures that will inform their dissertation work. Further, they help students develop the program's degree-level learning outcomes, including those related to the depth and breadth of knowledge in the field, communication skills, research and scholarship, and professional capacity (including time and information management). The areas in which students take their comprehensive examinations can be listed on their CVs as indicators of their research and teaching interests.

Comprehensive examinations may be written in the following 5 areas, which align with the department's strengths in research and graduate training:

- 1) Aging and the Life Course
- 2) Health and Health Inequality
- 3) Inequality, Power, and Social Regulation
- 4) Social Demography
- 5) Work, Occupations, and Professions

Students who are enrolled in a collaborative specialization may also take one of their comprehensive examinations in either [Migration and Ethnic Relations](#) or [Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction](#).

Students should think about their potential comprehensive exam areas upon entering the doctoral program and plan their coursework accordingly. Courses related to the

comprehensive exam areas are typically taught every year or on a rotating basis. These courses are helpful as partial preparation for comprehensive exams.

Preparing to Take Your Comprehensive Examinations

The Graduate Program Assistant will email first-year students on or around the last day of classes of the winter term for students to declare both of their comprehensive exams. Students have about a week to make their choices after consulting with their supervisor(s). The Graduate Chair is also available if students have questions or want additional advice. In light of students' declarations, the Graduate Chair and Program Assistant will then organize which exams will be offered in each of the two sittings (October and February) of students' second year in the program. Students will be notified in mid-May of the schedule for both exams.

Comprehensive exams are scheduled to start on the second Tuesday of **October** and **February**.

In exceptional circumstances, and with prior approval from both the Graduate Chair and relevant Comprehensive Examination Committee, an additional date may be available in June (again, beginning on the second Tuesday). Students must request a June exam date in writing (via email) by December 1 to the Graduate Chair, and requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Each area has an associated reading list that is reviewed and updated annually by the area committee. The Graduate Program Assistant will email students a reading list no less than four months prior to a given examination (i.e., in June for the October sitting, and in October for the February sitting).

Preparing for a comprehensive exam is difficult, time-intensive, and usually requires months of reading and studying. Students are encouraged to talk with the examination committee members about their expectations for the examination and to ask questions about the literature they are reading. Students are also encouraged to review old examinations in the area and to practice drafting answers.

Additional resources to help students study – including past reading lists and comprehensive exams as well as tips for studying for and writing your exams – are available on the [Grad Intranet](#), accessible using one's Western username and password through our department webpage.

Format of the Comprehensive Examinations

Each comprehensive examination typically takes the form of a three-day take-home examination. The examination committee prepares at least three questions for the

students taking the exam, and students generally answer three questions in the form of 10–12-page essays. The precise nature of the format, length, and style will be at the discretion of the particular comprehensive examining committee.

Students are expected to rely primarily on the literature included in the reading lists when answering the questions on the exam, and they are permitted (and encouraged) to draw on additional literature as well to help answer a question better and more fully.

Students who require additional time to take their exams due to extenuating circumstances such as caregiving should email the Graduate Chair at least 3 weeks prior to the date of the exam. In these cases, which are decided on a case-by-case basis, students may be granted an extended period of time to complete their exam of up to 5 days.

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examinations

Examination committees develop and evaluate the examinations and are composed of a Chair and at least two other faculty members nominated by the Graduate Chair. The current makeup of each committee is available on the [Grad Intranet](#). The committee decision is based on a majority vote.

The exams are viewed as a **test of competency** in the area. Passing an area exam requires: (1) a coherent, concise, and accurate synthesis and discussion of relevant literature that reflects specificity and depth, and (2) the display of an intelligent and critical perspective on pertinent readings in response to a given exam question (and which explicitly addresses all parts of the question asked). Committee members need to see that the student comprehends the key issues and can think coherently about them. Answers must do more than summarize the arguments of those who have written on a given topic. They must utilize the works contained in the reading list to make an argument that is directly relevant to the question being asked. A good comprehensive examination answer demonstrates not only comprehensive knowledge of a field, but understanding of the key issues and debates, and generally, the ability to think critically about these issues and debates.

Exam answers, including answers to fulfill a conditional pass, will be subject to submission for textual similarity review through the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University.

Students can receive a **pass with distinction** (a rare designation for those exams that demonstrate both competence and excellence), **pass**, **conditional pass**, or **fail**. Exams with one failing answer in the presence of an otherwise passable exam can be awarded a conditional pass. Students who receive a conditional pass will be given one opportunity to rewrite the failed question in the form of a written essay of no longer

than 15 pages, to be submitted to the committee within two weeks of the evaluation decision.

Students who fail an examination will be given a written explanation, and they may seek further information and advice from their committee members. Students will generally retake their failed examination at the next sitting that that comp is offered. Students who fail an examination for a second time will normally be asked to withdraw from the program.

Faculty Responsibilities for the Comprehensive Examinations

Area committee members review and update reading lists annually. The Graduate Committee monitors reading lists to ensure consistency across areas. Each Exam Committee Chair is responsible for setting questions and grading the examination in consultation with the other committee members.

The Exam Committee Chair emails the student – copying the other committee members, the Graduate Chair, and the Graduate Program Assistant – with the results of their adjudication. This should include the decision (pass with distinction, pass, conditional pass, or fail) as well as some feedback on the exam as a whole and on each specific question. Students receive notification of the decision within three weeks of the examination. All correspondence concerning the comprehensive examinations should be copied to the Graduate Chair and Graduate Program Assistant so that an appropriate record is made and kept on file.

Dissertation

A **dissertation** (or, alternatively, a doctoral **thesis**) represents the culmination of your doctoral training. It is an extensive, intensive, original research project that makes a substantive, methodological, and/or theoretical contribution to the discipline.

Dissertation Proposal

The purpose of the dissertation proposal milestone is for students to demonstrate the theoretical and methodological background as well as writing and oral communication skills necessary to proceed to concentrated work on their dissertations. The proposal provides an opportunity for students to interact with their supervisor and supervisory committee member as they develop their projects. Students should complete their proposal **by the end of fall term in year 3** of the program, following the successful completion of their two comprehensive exams.

The dissertation proposal is a milestone of our program and requires the following:

- 1) The selection of a supervisor and supervisory committee member.
- 2) Approval of the proposal by both the supervisor and the supervisory committee member.
- 3) An oral presentation of the approved proposal to which faculty and students are invited to attend. Presentations are held twice a year, generally in **March** and in **November**. See the Graduate Chair or Graduate Program Chair for specific dates.
- 4) Completion of Part B of the [PhD Supervisory Committee & Thesis Proposal Milestone Report](#).

In developing your proposal, please consult the following resources:

- 1) The [Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Guidelines](#) provide details such as what should be included and what questions to consider in the preparation of one's proposal. A proposal typically includes the research questions to be addressed, key background literature, the data and methods, and expected contributions. The proposal should also clearly describe their plan and timeline – what will be done, how, and when.
- 2) The content and structure of the proposed dissertation should be developed in consultation with the supervisor and supervisory committee member. In the proposal, students should clearly specify which one of the two SGPS-approved dissertation formats they will follow: (a) monograph or (b) integrated articles. If the dissertation will follow the integrated-article format, the student needs to identify each of the articles along with the individual problems, questions, and methods involved in each.
- 3) Students planning to conduct research involving human participants (e.g., an original survey, participant observation, interviews, focus groups) need to obtain approval from the University's [Non-Medical Research Ethics Boards](#). This is not a simple process. The ethics approval process, from start to finish, can take up to 3 months, so students and their supervisors need to plan accordingly and begin early.

The submission of the proposal represents a commitment by the student to pursue the dissertation. Once a student completes their dissertation proposal, they may typically be referred to as a "PhD Candidate."

Dissertation Format

Students may submit their dissertation in either **monograph** or **integrated-article** format. Dissertations in sociology typically range from 150 to 250 pages, and they should not be shorter than 100 pages, excluding appendices. Full information about the components required and formatting guidelines can be found in the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' [Thesis Regulations](#) (see section 8.3).

A **monograph format dissertation** will usually include the following chapters:

- 1) An introductory chapter that provides an overview of the thesis, and that motivates and establishes the broader significance of the topic.
- 2) A literature review chapter that sets out the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological context for the thesis.
- 3) A methods chapter that describes the data and analytical approach.
- 4) One or more chapters laying out and discussing the results.
- 5) A concluding chapter that discusses the findings within the context of the broader field of study.
- 6) A bibliography.
- 7) Appendices (only if applicable).

An **integrated-article format dissertation** should be comprised of:

- 1) An introductory chapter that provides an overview of the thesis, that motivates and establishes the broader significance of the topic, and that lays out how the empirical chapters work together to address broad research questions.
- 2) A minimum of 3 empirical chapters that are structured like journal articles, in that they introduce the research question(s), discuss the relevant literature, describe the data and methods, present the findings, and discuss the implications of the results in a concluding section. Alternatively, students can write separate literature review and/or data/methods chapters before laying out their findings in empirical chapters that follow.
- 3) A concluding chapter that relates the separate articles to each other and integrates and discusses the findings within the context of the broader field of study.
- 4) A separate bibliography should be included at the end of each chapter or article.

5) Appendices (only if applicable)

Dissertations will be subject to submission for textual similarity review through the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University (e.g., Turnitin).

Dissertation Examination

Upon completing their dissertation, a student must present a **public lecture** on their research and pass an **oral examination**. These typically occur on the same day, the examination following the public lecture. The public lecture is open to faculty, students, and the broader public. The examination is a closed-door session with the candidate and the examination committee.

The **examination committee** typically consists of a chair (determined by SGPS), two examiners from sociology (one of which can be the Supervisory Committee Member), a university examiner (i.e., someone from outside sociology who was not on the supervisory committee), and an external examiner (arms-length, almost always from another university).

All examiners must be arms-length from the student and supervisor and must not have been a collaborator on the thesis research. The student and supervisory are encouraged to consider the diversity of representation on the committee (e.g., gender) when choosing from a pool of qualified examiners. Note that the university examiner is meant to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to the examination; thus, scholars from a sociology department at one of Western's affiliate colleges are not usually acceptable. Please confer with the Graduate Chair if you have questions regarding the suitability of a potential examiner.

Additionally, the student should not be in contact with the university or external examiners. For this reason, the supervisor, not the student, should contact university and external examiners to determine whether they are willing to be an examiner and their availability.

Once a date for the examination has been determined, submit a completed [Doctoral Exam Request Form](#) signed by both the supervisor and student to the Graduate Program Assistant. The Graduate Chair will then request that an exam be scheduled. Please note that final approval of the examination committee is made by SGPS.

More details about the examination process can be found on [SGPS's Regulations webpage](#). SGPS also provides an in-depth guide – including forms, information about formatting, and timelines for submitting the dissertation and scheduling the examination – [here](#).

Summary of PhD Requirements

	PhD Degree
Minimum number of courses	8 half-courses
Mandatory courses*	9003: Research Design 9007: Advanced Statistical Analysis 9002: Sociological Perspectives <i>or</i> 9005: Contemporary Social Theory
Additional requirements	Professionalization Seminar Research Apprenticeship Two Comprehensive Examinations Dissertation Proposal Dissertation Dissertation Examination
Maximum registration period	For students who have entered the PhD program after completion of their MA: 6 calendar years from initial registration in the PhD program. For students who have transferred from the MA to PhD without completion of their MA: 7 calendar years from initial registration in the MA program.

**Note: Any of 9003, 9007, 9002, or 9005 may be waived if they or their equivalent has been taken previously. A maximum of 2 courses can be waived.*

Course Information

Course Registration & Add/Drop Deadlines

Graduate students must make their course selections by the end of the second week of classes each term. All course selections are subject to the approval of the Graduate Chair.

Courses dropped by the end of the first month of the official start of the term will not appear on students' transcripts. When a student drops a course after this date, but by the end of the second month of the term, the course remains on their transcript along with the notation "WDN" (withdrawn). Courses dropped after then end of the second month of the term are recorded as failures.

Course Completion within a Term

All requirements for an individual course must be completed by the end of the term in which a course is offered. In exceptional circumstances, and with permission of the course instructor and Graduate Chair, a student may take additional time to complete the course requirements.

Before a grade of "incomplete" can be granted, a student must first petition the course instructor for permission. If the course instructor is satisfied that the incomplete is warranted, the student must then seek permission from the Graduate Chair by submitting a [Request to Carry an Incomplete Form](#). Such requests must specify the reason for the incomplete, the remaining work to be completed, and the timeline for completion.

The following policies apply to incompletes in graduate courses:

- Students may be assigned an "INC" (incomplete) for a maximum of one term following the end date of a course.
- If a student completes the course requirements within this period, the "INC" will be removed from their transcript and replaced with their course mark.
- If a student fails to complete the course requirements within this period, they will automatically be assigned a "FAIL." Exceptions will be granted only under exceptional circumstances by appeal to the School of Graduate and Postsecondary Studies.

- Please note that Teaching Assistants may place their continued funding in jeopardy if they carry incompletes.

Accommodation for Completion of Course Requirements

In exceptional circumstances, a student may be provided special accommodations in the completion of a course requirement (e.g., exams, papers, etc.).

To request a one-time accommodation (e.g., for a brief illness or family emergency), the student should inform their professor when they are able to discuss a potential accommodation. Accommodations for on-going or chronic disabilities may be requested through Accessible Education Western, a confidential serviced that works with students and their programs (normally the Graduate Chair) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. See the School of Postgraduate Studies' [website](#) for more information. Students are encouraged to consult with the Graduate Chair if they would like to discuss whether this option would be appropriate for their situation. Students must also reach out to their course instructors at the beginning of each term to discuss their accommodations.

Completion of Course Requirements

Full-time graduate students who have not completed their coursework must either complete their coursework or register in at least two (2) courses for each of the fall and winter terms. These two courses must be in addition to any re-enrollment for "incompletes." MA Thesis Stream students in their second year as full-time students must register and complete their coursework in their second year, or they may be asked to withdraw from the graduate program.

Reading Courses

Typically, students will complete their coursework requirements by taking scheduled graduate courses in our department. In exceptional circumstances, permission to take a Reading Course may be granted at the discretion of the Graduate Chair. For instance, there is no course being offered in the student's area of study (broadly, rather than narrowly defined) in a given year (not a given term), or a student wishes to take additional courses beyond those that are required. Normally, students will be permitted to take a maximum of one (1) reading course. Students should work with their supervisors and/or proposed reading course instructor to submit this [Reading Course Proposal Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Reading courses taken as part of program requirements must be in areas not covered by current course offerings. In such courses, students are expected to perform at a

level comparable to what is expected in a course worth equivalent credit (in terms of, e.g., amount of reading, written work, and meetings with their instructor), and students' performance will be formally evaluated.

The following guidelines apply to reading courses:

- The student must demonstrate a need for the reading course. For instance, an appropriate regularly scheduled course is not being offered. The student and the Graduate Chair must ensure that the proposed reading course fits into the student's substantive program of study and that the requirement cannot be met through the regularly offered courses.
- A proposal of the work to be completed must be agreed to and signed by the student and the faculty member directing the course. The [proposal](#) must be submitted no later than the end of the second week of the term for the Graduate Program Assistant.
- At the end of the term, before credit is awarded, a statement of the work completed must be submitted along with the student's mark by the directing faculty member to the Graduate Chair. If the student has completed the work set forth in the proposal, the faculty member should note this in their statement. If the faculty member and the student have altered the work requirements or the method of evaluation, the faculty member must state what work was completed in their statement.

If these guidelines are not followed, the reading course will be judged to not have met the program requirements. A student may take any number of reading courses not meeting the program requirements, but courses that do not meet program requirements will not count toward the minimum course requirements or toward the computation of course averages.

Note that all graduate courses listed as offered on the graduate program website for a given year will be offered as long as there are student(s) signed up to take the course. In the case of low enrollment, the course will retain its listed designation but may be treated as a reading course.

Courses in Other Departments

Specific course requirements may be satisfied by taking courses from other departments or from interdisciplinary programs. Students can explore the possibilities for externally-offered courses available [here](#), or check with their collaborative specializations for specific course requirements ([Migration and Ethnic Relations](#) or [Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Resolution](#)). Approval to take a course outside of

our department must be granted by the Graduate Chair; students should submit this [Request Form](#) to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Auditing a Course

With the permission of the Graduate Chair, their supervisor, and the course instructor, a student may audit a course. Students may request an audit by completing the [Audit Request Form](#) and submitting it to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Additional Courses & Professional Development

While the MA and PhD programs define a minimum number of courses, students are encouraged to take more than the minimums, including in other areas of interest or possibly as auditors. Students are also encouraged to take part in the various colloquia, talks, seminars, conferences, and other events that occur in the Department, Faculty, University, and professional associations (such as the [Canadian Sociology Association](#), the [American Sociological Association](#), the [Canadian Population Society](#), and the [Population Association of America](#)).

Academic Matters

Planning the Program of Study

In September of each year, students are expected to develop a plan with their supervisor and the Graduate Chair indicating how and when they will meet the requirements of the program. This plan includes timing for all coursework and other milestones. While the Graduate Chair has the formal role of establishing the student's program of study, students are encouraged to speak to various faculty members for advice on courses and their program.

Accommodation

Accommodation for an ongoing disability may be requested through [Accessibility Education](#) at Western. It is a confidential service, working with students and their programs, normally their Graduate Chair, to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. The following website provides further information:

https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/graduate_students.html.

Students are encouraged to consult the program Graduate Chair if they would like to discuss whether this option would be appropriate for their situation.

Minimum Grades for Program Continuation

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' regulations (https://grad.uwo.ca/about_us/policies_procedures_regulations/index.html) require students to maintain a cumulative average of at least **70%**, with no grade less than **60%**. Students who fail to maintain those standards will be withdrawn. In addition, the Department of Sociology has imposed a regulation limiting the **number of grades below 70% a student may obtain to one**. Students receiving more than one grade below 70% may be asked to withdraw from the program.

Progression Requirements for Program Continuation

The following criteria are used to determine whether program conditions for progression towards the degree are being met. "Good standing" in the program is based on two primary criteria: (a) grades and (b) progress through the program.

At the MA level it is expected that students maintain a cumulative minimum B+ average as determined at the end of each term. At least three half-courses should

normally have been completed by the end of the first term. Students are expected to complete all courses by the end of the third term. In addition, students in the three-term research paper stream are expected to complete the research paper by the end of the third term. See [Summary of Degree Requirements](#) for a list of course requirements in this stream.

At the PhD level it is expected that students maintain a cumulative minimum B+ average. At the end of the first year, students should have completed six courses, including Sociology 9003, 9007, and either 9002 or 9005 (if these have not already been completed as part of an earlier program) and they should also have chosen a thesis supervisor. At the end of the second year, continuing students should have completed all coursework and comprehensive exams. The thesis proposal should be completed and approved in the summer (at the end of year 2) or the fall (beginning of year 3), following the completion of their comprehensive exams. The Research Apprenticeship should be completed by the end of the third year.

If these requirements are not met, the student will be sent a letter of warning and be given one semester to make up either grade or progress deficiencies. If grade or progress difficulties continue after that time, dismissal proceedings may be initiated. Students can use the usual procedures to appeal these decisions.

Master's to Doctoral Transfer

MRP students with outstanding academic records may be considered by the admission committee for direct transfer to the PhD program. Transfer students will not receive a Master's degree enroute (per SGPS regulation); however, the program requires transfer students to complete a research paper comparable in scope to an MRP. This can be considered preparation for the dissertation, and could be in the form of a publishable paper. This also allows the program to award a Master's degree retroactively if necessary for students are not able to complete the PhD. A student transferred from the MA program to the PhD program must complete a total of 10 graduate courses (as a minimum; students must also take into consideration the requirements of collaborative specializations and the courses necessary for their comprehensive exams). Other PhD program requirements remain the same. Transfers from the Master's to the Doctoral program must take place before the sixth term of Master's registration.

Progress Reports

Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires programs to prepare and file an annual progress report for each student in a graduate program. In Sociology, progress is formally reviewed via [Pathfinder](#) for all students at the end of the winter term (in April/May). Supervisors are requested to comment on the progress of

each of their MA and PhD students; these reports are then reviewed by the student and approved by the Graduate Chair.

These reviews of students' progress are an opportunity for continuing students to discuss their progress to date and for both new and continuing students to discuss their plan for the upcoming academic year. Students should also keep their supervisors up-to-date and seek feedback on their progress through consistent communication with their supervisors as well as with the Graduate Chair.

Students with unmet progression requirements may receive a letter of warning from the Graduate Chair, indicating progress deficiencies and providing timelines to make up deficiencies. If grade or progress difficulties continue, dismissal proceedings may be initiated. Students can use the usual procedures to appeal these decisions.

Plagiarism and Other Scholastic Offences

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' [Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students](#) document provides definitions of scholastic offences, procedures followed when a scholastic offence is detected, possible penalties, and the appeals process.

Notes on Plagiarism

With respect to the writing of papers, the execution of research, and all other university activities, graduate students are expected to adhere to the same ethical standards as are required of members of the faculty. Moreover, students are reminded that the papers they submit to meet program requirement should be the product of their own effort, and should not be written, or substantially revised, by someone else.

Self-plagiarism: Whereas plagiarism is typically the misrepresentation of another person's work as your own, self-plagiarism is the misrepresentation of the time and purpose for which work was written. In other words, it's more an issue of *when*, instead of from *whom*, the work originated. Note that submitting for credit in any course or program of study, without the knowledge and written approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit previously has been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere, is considered to be plagiarism.

In writing scholarly papers, the need to avoid plagiarism must be kept firmly in mind. Failure to do so may result in the student being asked to withdraw from the graduate program.

Plagiarism Among Graduate Students

On some occasions, plagiarism has been detected in the work of graduate students in the Department. Unacknowledged use of the written work of others is not tolerated, and the consequences are extremely serious.

The following excerpt from the Department of Sociology [Plagiarism Guidelines](#) clearly defines plagiarism:

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different forms of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

- *You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. In using another writer's words, you MUST both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer. In acknowledging a source from which a quote has been taken, you are to use the Style Guide recommended by your professor.*

Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

- *In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.*

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in the first point, above. Since the words are your own they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own: where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in the first point, above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgement and, when necessary, quotation marks if necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been

explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft.

Other Instances Where a Student May Be Required to Withdraw

1. There has been no evidence of progress on the thesis project for a considerable period of time. (Usually, such a decision is made only after a student has had ample prior warning.)
2. In the case of a PhD student, the student fails a given Comprehensive Examination for a second time.
3. The student's time limit, as specified by the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, has expired.

Academic Appeals at the Program Level

Appeals should be discussed with the Graduate Chair and must be initiated within four weeks of receipt of the grade, comprehensive exam result, or ruling in question. Before considering an appeal, please consult the policies and regulations on the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) [website](#).

Types of Appeals

- **Appeal of a Course Grade** - If the appeal relates to a specific assignment, a student must first attempt to resolve the matter informally with the course instructor. If the instructor is not available or if the matter is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student has a right to appeal to the Graduate Chair, who will be responsible for conducting the appeal or delegating responsibility for the appeal to an alternate member of the Graduate Committee. See below for appeal procedures.
- **Appeal of the Result of a PhD Comprehensive Examination** - The student has a right to appeal to the Graduate Chair, who will be responsible for conducting the appeal or delegating responsibility for the appeal to an alternate member of the Graduate Committee. See below for appeal procedures.
- **Extension to Normal Progression Requirements** - After the appropriate appeal processes (above) have been exhausted, a student has the right to appeal to the Graduate Chair to have normal progression requirements extended on compassionate, medical, or related grounds. The Graduate Chair will be responsible for conducting the appeal, which may involve consultation with

members of the Graduate Committee. Degree requirements will not generally be waived or altered to accommodate students who have failed exams or obtained low grades; rather, the accommodation normally takes the form of giving an additional opportunity to the student to complete a requirement. It is incumbent upon the applicant to provide, in writing, a full and thorough justification of the request.

Appeal Procedures

1. An appeal must be initiated in writing within four weeks of the issuance of the mark or ruling. Deadlines for filing appeals may be extended at the discretion of the Graduate Chair.
2. Appeals of Scholastic Offence decisions are not covered under this policy. The SGPS [Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students](#) document provides definitions of scholastic offences, procedures followed when a scholastic offence is detected, possible penalties, and the appeals process.
3. The specific processes differ slightly depending on whether the appeal is of (a) a grade on a test or paper or (b) an assessment of a comprehensive exam.
 - a) In cases where the quality of a test or paper is to be evaluated, the grades of two outside readers will be averaged to determine the revised grade. Papers are to be submitted to outside readers free of the name of the student and of the instructor involved, and without the original comments from the instructor. Outside readers will be asked to provide critical comments on the paper in question, which will be forwarded along with the results to the student in cases where (a) this is requested by the student and (b) the Graduate Chair (or alternate) agrees that the case in question justifies such a request.
 - b) In cases where the quality of a comprehensive exam is to be evaluated, the exam will be read by two outside readers. Exams are to be submitted to outside readers free of the name of the student and of the committee members involved, and without the original comments from the committee. Outside readers will be asked to provide critical comments on the exam in question which will be forwarded along with the results to the student in cases where (a) this is requested by the student and (b) the Graduate Chair (or alternate) agrees that the case in question justifies such a request.

4. The two readers for a given case will work independently. They are expected to refrain from any discussion of the merits of the paper / exam, except with the Graduate Chair (or alternate).
5. In cases where the Graduate Chair is involved, an alternate will take over the adjudication process.
6. In cases where the average of the two evaluators falls within 3 points (on a base of 100) of the grade originally assigned by the instructor, the latter's grade will stand. (This is a reflection of the greater knowledge of course expectations held by the instructor, along with the implication that three or fewer points of difference shows only random variation.) In all other cases, the average of the two evaluators will become the new grade.
7. To assist with the appeals process and with student assessment, it is recommended that the requirements for papers (including referencing, length, deadlines) be provided to students at the outset of the course. A grading rubric is also highly recommended, and where such a rubric exists, the instructor should provide the Graduate Chair with the rubric when an assignment or test is being appealed.
8. After the appropriate appeal process has been exhausted within the department, the Graduate Chair will inform the student of his/her right to take the case to the Vice-Provost, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS). A request to appeal the decision of the program must be made to SGPS in writing, no later than three weeks after the program decision has been communicated to the student.

Some decisions may be appealed further to the Senate Review Board Academic. The Vice-Provost's rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA). A decision or ruling remains in effect unless overturned or modified by the individual or body hearing an appeal of that decision or ruling.

Code of Student Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow.

Students can find the Code of Conduct here:
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>