THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM®

MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM

Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures

Department of Sociology
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

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Preamble

The Department of Sociology Graduate Policy and Procedure Handbook (hereafter called "Handbook") of the Department of Sociology is developed by the graduate faculty of the Department. This handbook is expected to be used in conjunction with UAB Graduate School guidelines and the UAB Graduate School Catalog. The Handbook does not take the place of these documents; rather, it specifies department-level policies and procedures.

The Handbook is advisory, not binding, for decisions within the graduate program. Policies described in this Handbook are subject to change. Major changes are typically announced in e-mail and/or program meetings, but students are also encouraged to review the handbook (including the Appendix which includes the Handbook Revision History for this current version of this Handbook) and are expected to review sections that apply to issues that are current for them.

A. The Medical Sociology Graduate Program

A1. Leadership and Administration

The Graduate Program Director of the Medical Sociology program and the Chair of the Department of Sociology maintain primary responsibility for administering the graduate program. In addition, the Sociology graduate faculty and the Graduate Program Committee, together with graduate student representatives elected by the graduate student body, fulfill secondary and supplemental administrative functions within the program. The Graduate Program Committee is composed of the Graduate Program Director and two to three additional faculty members chosen by the Department Chair. The Chair of the Department serves as an ex-officio member.

A2. Admissions

Admission to the Ph.D. program in Medical Sociology requires the approval of the Sociology Graduate Committee and the Graduate School. This Graduate Program Committee is responsible for recruiting the most qualified graduate students and for balancing the interests of the Medical Sociology program with the available financial resources. The committee reviews and makes recommendations for admission.

Minimum admission requirements are as follows:
- A bachelor's or master's degree from an accredited institution in sociology or a related field with a minimum of 18 hours of social science coursework, preferably including social theory, statistics, and research methodology;
- An overall grade point average (GPA) of 3.0, based on a 4.0 system, or a 3.2 GPA for the last 60 semester hours in a BA/BS program;
- A 3.0 GPA in all previous graduate coursework;

- For international students, a minimum TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or other exam aligning with UAB Graduate School minimum admission requirements. The Graduate School exempts students from some countries where education is in English (see Graduate School website for current list of countries)

Furthermore, the following criteria are also required in the admissions process:
- Evidence of Scholarship (e.g., Writing Sample);
- Evidence of Quantitative Preparation or Ability (e.g., statistics or math coursework; GRE test results)
- Statement of Purpose, with emphasis on Research and Scholarship;
- Three Letters of Recommendation;
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).

Exceptional students who fail to meet the above requirements will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

A3. Program Tracks

Students admitted to the Medical Sociology PhD Program will follow one of three tracks:
- Track 1 Students who enter with a BA
- Track 2 Students who enter with a MA (or equivalent) and their prior thesis is accepted by our program
- Track 3 Students who enter with a MA (or equivalent) and a thesis is required to be completed in the program

For students entering with a Master's Degree or equivalent, the Graduate Program Director (if needed, in consultation with the Graduate Committee) will review the student's application packet including transcripts and writing sample, evaluate course transfers (previous courses can only be used if the class was never used for a degree, per Graduate School rules), and designate the student to a track. Students entering the program with a master's degree are granted waivers for a maximum of 16 semester hours of graduate work, upon approval of the Graduate Program Director. Only electives can be waived; required courses, including two medical sociology core courses, must be taken in the program. Students transferring from another graduate program without having received a graduate degree may be granted waivers for a maximum of 12 semester hours of graduate work, upon approval of the Graduate Program Director and the professors in charge of the respective coursework in question. The latter hours are considered transfer credits, and their allowance is governed by the Graduate School.

If the student completed a master's thesis in another program, they must also submit a copy to the Graduate Program Director for evaluation before the final track designation. Students who have an MA, MPH, MPA, etc., but have not written a thesis will be required to write a Master's Thesis (Track 3) before they proceed to the dissertation. Students who enter the program with a Master's Degree are not required to make an oral defense of their

thesis approved by another accredited institution; however, the program reserves the right to not accept their previous thesis and place the student on Track 3.

Students who enter with a master's degree and have taken comprehensive exams at their prior institution can petition the Graduate Committee to possibly waive the exam at UAB. Otherwise, all students entering, whether they have a master's degree or not, must take comprehensive exams at UAB.

A4. Financial Aid and Assistantships

Support is available for students through fellowships and graduate teaching and research assistantships (per Graduate School definitions). Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) are typically the main form of graduate student support. Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) may be available if individual faculty have research funding with allocation for GRA positions, with approval by individual faculty member. In addition, GRA positions are sometimes available through partnerships with other UAB departments. The department will make every effort to pay for tuition when possible. Graduate assistants who do not already have insurance on their own may also receive health insurance coverage (c*heck with the Department and the Graduate School for up-to-date details*). Assistantship payment is based on availability of funds and satisfactory progress in the program. Satisfactory progress is discussed below in the *Yearly Student Evaluations* section.

Assistantships are awarded based on student merit, departmental need, and available funding. Students are evaluated by the Graduate Program Committee with recommendations submitted to faculty members for funding on an annual basis. A student may usually receive departmental funding up to and no longer than four years entering with a BA degree, or up to three years entering the program with a master's degree. Extensions are sometimes given based upon departmental needs. Sometimes external funding may lead to extensions of departmental funding in cases where the student has already exhausted assistantship-based departmental funding and the funds are dispersed or supplemented by the department (see below for further information regarding fellowships/scholarships).

Students who receive funding are required to sign a contract with the Department of Sociology outlining the duties and performance expected on a yearly (or, in some cases, semester-by semester) basis. Students are to negotiate their weekly work schedules with the faculty member to whom they are assigned. Regardless of weekly work schedule, students are still expected to check their email and respond on a daily basis, Monday through Friday. Students who are unavailable to work for a period of time—including being unable to check and respond to email on a daily basis—are required to obtain approval from the faculty member they work for and the Graduate Program Director.

For additional or alternative sources of support, students are encouraged to write and submit proposals for externally funded predoctoral fellowships and grants to provide

themselves with support during their dissertation years. Students are expected to inform the Graduate Program Director of their plans to submit grant/fellowship applications at least two months in advance of submission deadlines. With external applications, students are required to work with the CAS Research office and UAB's Office of Sponsored Programs to prepare their applications according to policies and procedures related to timelines and deadlines. When applying for these funds, stipends, travel, tuition, and health insurance should be included in the application if allowed by the funding agency. If a student receives the award, they are expected to use the grant resources first and in lieu of departmental funds. This policy also applies to students who receive fellowships and scholarships. Students who receive their own fellowships and/or scholarships must still abide by Graduate School rules for the timeline to completion.

B. Mentoring and Advising

B1. Temporary Faculty Advisor

A Temporary Faculty Advisor in collaboration with the Graduate Program Director serves as the primary mentor for the student during their first year of studies. The Graduate Program Director assigns entering graduate students a Temporary Faculty Advisor. The student and advisor are expected to meet at least four times in the students' first year—once in the first few weeks of their first semester, once before registration, and two more times at any point in their second semester. The first meeting is encouraged to be face-to-face, although future meetings can be virtual. Scheduling the required meetings with their advisor is the student's responsibility. In addition to these mandatory meetings, faculty should be available to answer informal questions periodically through email or meetings.

These meetings will help students:
- Meet faculty and begin their academic network;
- Find answers to basic questions about the program;
- Strategize coursework and interests;
- Begin developing their curriculum vitae (CV).

B2. Thesis/Dissertation Chair

All students are required to select their main advisor to serve as thesis/dissertation chair by the Fall of their second year, at the latest. The thesis/dissertation chair will provide academic and professional guidance while the student works toward a thesis or dissertation. The thesis/dissertation chair ensures that significant progress is being made toward completion of the master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. Students are expected to examine graduate faculty members' individual research interests and projects throughout the course of mentor selection. Students are expected to also consider the number of

other students the faculty member is working with; it is strongly recommended that faculty members do not chair more than three student committees at a time.

The student is expected to schedule a meeting with their desired thesis/dissertation chair and gain written approval via Part 1 of Thesis/Dissertation Chair Checklist (available under Graduate Forms on the Department website) from the faculty member to serve as their chair. If completing a thesis *and* dissertation, this process must be repeated prior to beginning the dissertation proposal process. Students are expected to provide the signed Thesis/Dissertation Chair Checklist (Part 1) to the Graduate Program Director and Department of Sociology Administrative Staff. The student and faculty member must complete Part 2 of the Thesis/Dissertation Chair Checklist within a reasonable time frame and also submit this signed form to the Graduate Program Director and the Department of Sociology Administrative Staff.

Advisor selection is a crucial aspect of graduate study in the Department of Sociology. Failure to obtain a thesis/dissertation chair hinders progress toward degree completion and will result in the designation of unsatisfactory progress on the student's annual review. In the event that a student is unable to obtain a thesis/dissertation chair after meeting with at least three faculty members, they are expected to consult with the Graduate Program Director regarding their options for continuing in the program.

In the event that the thesis/dissertation chair is on administrative leave or sabbatical, it is the student's responsibility to obtain a secondary advisor for the period of time their thesis/dissertation chair is on leave. Students are expected to notify the Graduate Program Director of this faculty member. The student should not plan to defend during their thesis/dissertation chair's leave/sabbatical. If the student does need to defend during that period, they are expected to formally change their chair.

Former faculty members may not chair thesis/dissertation committees, unless they were chairs at the time of their departure. In such cases, they may serve as a co-chair with a current department faculty member. Students are expected to consult the Graduate School rules related to committee composition.

B3. Graduate Program Director

The Graduate Program Director serves as an academic advisor for all students. The Graduate Program Director's advisory capacity includes help with course selection, evaluation of academic progress, and addressing any student/departmental issues that may arise. This arrangement ensures that all students receive consistent information with regard to course and degree requirements. As such, the Graduate Program Director maintains and updates student files, which include information on course completion, yearly student evaluations, and any other relevant information. The Graduate Program Director represents the final word on issues concerning course and degree requirements.

B4. Student Mentor

The Graduate Program Director assigns entering graduate students a student peer mentor. This person is an experienced graduate student who serves as an informal mentor. This arrangement fosters collaboration among the graduate students as well as a smoother transition into the departmental environment. Both students receive guidelines of the peer mentor relationship from the Graduate Program Director.

C. Curriculum, Degree Requirements, and Associated Procedures

The Department of Sociology graduate program curriculum is outlined below. Questions regarding fulfillment of current requirements should be addressed to the Graduate Program Director of the department.

Check the latest UAB Graduate School Web Site for requirements and deadlines. Note that Medical Sociology program requirements for course work may exceed the Graduate School minimum. Graduate students are expected to keep up with all Graduate School requirements such as submitting forms and final dissertations. See Graduate School website for requirements and forms.

C1. Required Coursework

Required Coursework follows three tracks:
- Track 1 Required for students entering with a BA
- Track 2 Required for students entering with a MA and prior thesis accepted
- Track 3 Required for students entering with a MA and in department thesis required. Track 3a is required for students who do not desire to be awarded a MA degree from UAB, and Track 3b is required for students who do desire to be awarded a MA degree from UAB.

Required Coursework is detailed in the Table below and includes the following components (see Coursework Sequence Form on the Department website for ordering of courses):
- Proseminar (3 hours): required for all students and must be taken in residence
- Medical Sociology Core (9 hours): required for all students and must be taken in residence
- Theory Core (6 hours): required for all students and must be taken in residence
- Statistics and Research Core (15 hours): required for all students and must be taken in residence
- Sociology/Health/Methods Electives: hours required varies by track, see details below; most must be taken in residence
- Thesis Research Hours (6 hours): required for students on Tracks 1 and 3
- Dissertation Research Hours (24 hours): required for all students

The Sociology Graduate Curriculum: Required Coursework				
	Track 1	**Track 2**	**Track 3a**	**Track 3b**
	BA to PHD	**MA to PHD**	**MA to PHD**	
	UAB Thesis Required	*Prior Thesis Accepted*	*UAB Thesis Required*	
			No MA	**MA desired**
Proseminar (3 hours)				
SOC 702 Fall: Research				
SOC 702 Spring: Professionalization				
SOC 702 Summer: Teaching				
Medical Sociology Core (9 hours)				
SOC 780 Medical Sociology				
Medical Sociology Elective[a]				
Medical Sociology Elective[a]				
Theory Core (6 hours)				
SOC 720 Sociological Thought				
SOC 722 Medical Sociological Theory				
Statistics and Research Core (15 hours)				
SOC 601 Data Management and Analysis				
SOC 703 Regression Analysis				
SOC 704 Categorical Data Analysis				
SOC 705 Advanced Research Methods				
SOC 711 Qualitative Methods				
Sociology/Health/Methods Electives[b]				
GRD 717 Principles of Scientific Inquiry				
Elective				
Elective				
Elective				
Elective			n/a	
Elective			n/a	
Elective		n/a	n/a	n/a
Elective		n/a	n/a	n/a
Elective		n/a	n/a	n/a
Thesis Research Hours (6 hours)[c]				
SOC 699 Thesis Research Hours[c]	see c	n/a	see c	see c
Dissertation Research Hours (24 hours)[d]				
SOC 798 or Other Methods Courses (12 hours max)				
SOC 799 Doctoral Dissertation Research (12 hours min)				
Total Credit Hours Taken	90	75	75	81

Track 1: Required for students who enter with a BA; Track 2: Required for students entering with MA and prior thesis accepted; Track 3: Required for students entering with a MA and in department thesis required; 3a: do not desire MA degree from UAB; 3b: do desire MA degree from UAB

[a]See Course Catalog for approved medical sociology core electives.

[b]GRD 717 counts as an elective but is required by the Graduate School. Up to two electives may be taken online. Up to two electives may be taken outside of the department. Additional online courses *may* be approved if methods oriented. Seek approval from the Graduate Program Director *before* registering for online/external electives.

[c]Thesis Research Hours are required for Students on Tracks 1 and 3b. Students on Track 3a may substitute Thesis Research Hours for other electives *if approved* by the Graduate Program Director and their Thesis Advisor

[d]A minimum of 12 hours of SOC 799 are required for all students, per Graduate School. The remaining 12 hours can be a combination of extra methods courses, SOC 798 hours, or 799 hours. Seek the Graduate Program Director's approval before registering for non-799 dissertation hours.

Coursework and Candidacy Requirements for Master's Degree.
Students are required to complete 30 credit hours to earn the Master's Degree, including 6 thesis research hours (SOC 699). Furthermore, prior to being admitted to candidacy for the M.A. degree, students must have completed the medical sociological theory course (SOC 722), four core methods courses (SOC 601, SOC 703, SOC 704, and SOC 705 or SOC 711), two courses in the medical sociology core, and three hours of Prosem (SOC 702), and made a successful oral defense of the thesis proposal (see C3 below for further details about the Master's thesis).

Transfer Credits.
The number of allowed transfer credits is governed by the Graduate School. Students should check with the Graduate School guidelines and the Graduate Program Director at the time of application if transfer graduate credits apply.

Other Requirements.
All graduate students must teach a class independently, or GTA for research methods or statistics (i.e., teach lab) to receive the Ph.D. Being a GTA for online statistics or methods will not satisfy this requirement.

C2. Graduate Proseminar Functions

The graduate proseminar series (SOC 702) is required of all entering graduate students in their initial three terms in the graduate program. This series orients students to professional norms, values and practices, to department culture, and faculty's research programs. It also introduces students to best practices in college teaching.

C3. The Master's Thesis

Students pursuing the doctoral degree in Track 1 or Track 3 must produce a research-based thesis. This thesis is in the standard form of an American Sociological Association (ASA) journal article with appended materials. Specifically, this journal article thesis will consist of: 1) a journal article manuscript with approximately 10,000 words, including references, in line with ASA journal requirements, plus tables and figures; and 2) additional appendices which include necessary research documentation such as human subject review approval forms from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), survey instruments, supplementary tables and figures, and extended methodologies.

The master's thesis process involves: 1) securing a thesis chair (see *Thesis/Dissertation Chair* section) and completing the Thesis/Dissertation Chair Checklist (see Graduate Forms on the Department website); 2) forming the thesis committee; 3) writing a thesis research proposal under the mentorship of the thesis chair and committee; 4) receiving approval from the IRB (see Graduate School requirements); 5) defending the thesis proposal in a closed oral defense; 6) submitting paperwork for entering candidacy with the Graduate School; 7) completing research for the thesis and writing the complete thesis under the mentorship of the thesis chair and committee; 8) completing Graduate School paperwork for scheduling the defense and following Graduate School protocol to advertise

the defense (see Graduate School website); 9) defending the thesis through a public oral defense; and 10) submitting the completed manuscript to the Graduate School following Graduate School guidelines. Current AI policies regarding theses and dissertations from the UAB Graduate School and the Department of Sociology will apply (see Graduate School website and Department website).

More on the thesis committee, the thesis proposal, announcing the thesis defense, and the final thesis is below.

Thesis Committee.
The thesis committee consists of a minimum of three full-time graduate faculty members, including the thesis chair and one member from outside the Department of Sociology. The Thesis Chair must approve all members of the committee, and committee members must agree to serve on the student's committee. Committee members must have UAB Graduate School faculty status. UAB faculty members external to the Department of Sociology must seek UAB Graduate School faculty status through their home department. The Thesis Chair must approve all committee members, and committee members must agree to serve.

Thesis Proposal.
Students are strongly encouraged to choose a thesis topic and data in their first year of the program. A document with suggested thesis data is included in the Graduate Forms on the Department website (see Thesis Recommendations). The thesis proposal must include 1) a clear statement of the research aims and hypotheses, 2) a discussion of the primary theories and previous research informing the study design and hypotheses, 3) a discussion of the significance and innovation of the project, 4) a detailed description of the proposed data, measures, and methods, 5) expected limitations of the study, and 6) projected timeline for each component of the study. The oral proposal defense includes only the student and the thesis committee members. The student will present for 10-15 minutes, covering each of the major components of the proposal discussed above, then will answer questions from the committee regarding the proposal. After the student leaves the room, the committee will determine whether the student can proceed with the thesis as proposed, whether they need to make changes, or whether they need to repeat the proposal defense with a different proposal because of fundamental concerns regarding the project. The thesis chair will oversee the changes throughout the remainder of the thesis period, with the student also meeting with the additional committee members throughout the process.

Announcing the Thesis Defense.
It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their thesis defense's date, time and location is sufficiently advertised to the public. Per Graduate School rules, at least two weeks prior to a defense, a student must submit a form requesting approval of the scheduled date and time. When the approval form request is received, the time and location of the defense is added to the Graduate School Calendar of Events. Students are responsible for checking

the Graduate School's online calendar to ensure that information has been entered. The student must also announce the date and time of a thesis or dissertation defense to the department (faculty and graduate students) via e-mail at least one week prior to the date of the defense.

Final Thesis.
As discussed above, the final thesis is expected to conform to the standard form of an ASA journal article, as well as be formatted according to Graduate School requirements. The thesis is an independent project, but students will work with their thesis chair and committee members to receive guidance as they conduct their thesis research and draft their final thesis. In addition to the thesis proposal components discussed above, the thesis also includes a detailed results section, a discussion, and a conclusion, as well as any appendices with additional study information. Students also must update their introduction, methods, and limitations from what was presented in their proposal. The final thesis defense is a public defense that must be advertised according to Graduate School guidelines. Students will present for 15-20 minutes, covering each of the major components of the thesis discussed above, then will first answer questions from the committee and next answer questions from additional audience members. After the student and non-committee members leave the room, the committee will determine whether the student has passed the thesis defense and what—if any—edits are required. The student must then follow Graduate School procedures for final formatting and submission of the thesis.

C4. The Comprehensive Examination

Timeline for Comprehensive Examination.
All students are required to take a comprehensive examination no later than the 3rd week of the 4th fall semester after being admitted to the PhD Program. The exam is expected to be taken near the completion of all substantive coursework. The exam will be offered two times a year: the 3rd week of the fall and the 3rd week of the spring semesters. Students are expected to notify the Comprehensive Exam Committee of their intent to take the exam at least six months prior to the exam date they select at which time the Comprehensive Exam Committee Chair will confirm the student has the current reading list.

Exam Semester	Notify Committee of Intent to Take Exam	Study	Take Exam
FALL	Six months prior to exam date	Summer	3rd Week of Fall Semester
SPRING	Six months prior to exam date	Fall	3rd Week of Spring Semester

Exam Description.
The comprehensive exam is an in-person written exam that requires the student to answer 4 out of 6 questions related to major theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues in medical sociology.

Reading List.
The reading list is based on the major theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues in medical sociology. The comprehensive exam committee will update the reading list on an annual basis and finalize the reading list for the following two administrations by the fourth week of the Spring Semester.

Exam Preparation.
Preparation is absolutely critical to passing the exam. All students are expected to take initiative and use the resources provided by the department to prepare for the exam.

Scheduling the Exam.
The student is required to schedule the exact date, time, and location of the exam with the Comprehensive Exam Committee four weeks *prior* to the exam. Students must select two four-hour time slots during the exam week, as made available by the Comprehensive Exam Committee.

Taking the Exam.
The student will answer four of six questions as an in-person written exam during two four-hour time slots. The student will receive three unique questions in each time slot and is required to answer two of those three questions in each time slot. While taking the exam, students may access any notes and materials (e.g., PDFs of articles, previously written practice questions, reading notes) they bring with them as printed or offline digital files. Access to the internet will be strictly prohibited. While taking the exam, students may not discuss exam content with anyone other than the Comprehensive Exam Committee or Department of Sociology Administrative Staff, or their designates. Current AI policies from the UAB Graduate School and the Department of Sociology will apply (see Graduate School website and Department website).

Comprehensive Exam Committee.
The Comprehensive Exam Committee will consist of three faculty members selected by the Department Chair. One faculty member will head the committee (serving as Comprehensive Exam Committee Chair) and ensure questions are distributed and answers are received. The Comprehensive Exam Committee Chair will also notify the Graduate Program Director of the exam outcome. The Graduate Program Director is not a member of the Comprehensive Exam Committee.

Exam Grades.
Members of the Comprehensive Exam Committee will assign the exam a grade of:

1. Pass with Honors: The exam received the department's highest distinction. The exam is well-written *and* provides exceptional responses to *all* questions.
2. Pass: The exam received a passing grade. The exam is written clearly and provides adequate responses to questions.
3. Pass with Revision: The exam has some limitations in writing and/or response to the questions. If a student receives a grade of "pass with revision," they have 30 days to *both* meet with the exam committee and address the committee's concerns. If revisions are approved, the exam will receive a grade of Pass. If revisions are rejected, the student will have one and only one opportunity to retake the exam at its next administration. If the student is required to revise more than two individual exam questions, the exam will be graded as a fail.
4. Fail: The exam is inadequate in terms of writing and/or response to the questions. This can occur when the committee determines that more than two individual exam questions require revision. Students who fail the examination but wish to continue in the program must re-take the exam at its next administration. Students who fail the comprehensive exam a second time will be dismissed from the Medical Sociology Graduate Program.

C5. The Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation process is as follows: 1) securing a dissertation chair (see prior section) and completing the Thesis/Dissertation Chair Checklist (see Graduate Forms on the Department website); 2) forming the dissertation committee; 3) developing a dissertation aims page; 4) having a dissertation committee meeting with all members from within the Department to discuss dissertation aims page; 5) writing a dissertation proposal under the mentorship of the dissertation chair and committee; 6) receiving approval from the IRB (see Graduate School requirements); 7) defending the dissertation proposal in a closed oral defense; 8) submitting paperwork for entering candidacy with the Graduate School; 9) completing research for the dissertation and writing the complete dissertation under the mentorship of the thesis chair and committee; 10) determining a preliminary dissertation defense date and following the Defense Timeline (see below); 11) completing Graduate School paperwork for scheduling the defense and following Graduate School protocol to advertise the defense (see Graduate School website); 12) defending the dissertation through a public oral defense; and 13) submitting the completed manuscript to the Graduate School following Graduate School guidelines. Current AI policies regarding theses and dissertations from the UAB Graduate School and the Department of Sociology will apply (see Graduate School website and Department website).

More on the dissertation committee, dissertation aims page, the dissertation proposal, candidacy, the Defense Timeline, announcing the dissertation defense, and the final dissertation defense is below.

Dissertation Committee.
In consultation with faculty, and near the completion of all substantive coursework, a student forms a dissertation committee consisting of at least five members holding UAB Graduate Faculty Status. The committee includes a minimum of three faculty members (including the Dissertation Chair) in the Department of Sociology and at least one member from a UAB department external to the Department of Sociology. The fifth committee member can be a faculty member from Sociology or another UAB department. All committee members must have UAB Graduate School Faculty Status. UAB faculty members external to the Department of Sociology must seek UAB Graduate School faculty status through their home department. The Dissertation Chair must approve all committee members, and committee members must agree to serve.

Dissertation Aims Page and Committee Meeting.
Prior to writing the dissertation proposal, the student, in consultation with their Dissertation Chair, will develop a two-to-three-page summary of their proposed dissertation aims, major theory and literature informing their proposed dissertation, the significance and innovation of their proposed dissertation, proposed data and methods, and projected timeline. The student will then distribute the aims page to all committee members from the Department of Sociology and schedule a committee meeting with this same group to discuss. Comments from this meeting will then inform the student's development of their full dissertation proposal.

The Dissertation Proposal.
The dissertation proposal must include 1) a clear statement of the research aims and hypotheses, 2) a discussion of the primary theories and previous research informing the study design and hypotheses, 3) a discussion of the significance and innovation of the project, 4) a detailed description of the proposed data and methods, 5) expected limitations of the study, and 6) projected timeline for each component of the study. The oral proposal defense includes only the student and the dissertation committee members. The student will present for 10-15 minutes, covering each of the major components of the proposal discussed above, then will answer questions from the committee regarding the proposal. After the student leaves the room, the committee will determine whether the student can proceed with the dissertation as proposed, whether they need to make changes, or whether they need to repeat the proposal defense with a different proposal because of fundamental concerns regarding the project. The dissertation chair will oversee the changes throughout the remainder of the dissertation period, with the student also meeting with the additional committee members throughout the process.

Candidacy.
A student is admitted to candidacy by the UAB Graduate School after successful completion of coursework, passing of comprehensive exams, and oral defense of the

dissertation proposal. Candidacy is granted no earlier than the term in which the required substantive coursework is completed.

The Defense Timeline.
Dissertation Defense Timeline Checklist required; see Department website

1. Students are expected to be aware of dissertation defense and submission deadlines published by the Graduate School. Keeping these dates in mind, during the semester prior to the semester in which the student plans to defend their dissertation, the student is expected to meet with their dissertation chair to discuss their proposed defense date, as well as an updated timeline for completion of their dissertation. If the dissertation chair approves the preliminary date, the student then consults with the full dissertation committee regarding their availability and secures a preliminary defense date on the calendar. At this time, the student must fill in specific dates on the Dissertation Defense Timeline Checklist (see Department website) and distribute to all committee members and the Graduate Program Director.

2. A minimum of 9 weeks *before* the date of the student's planned dissertation defense, the student is required to submit a complete draft of their dissertation to their dissertation chair for review and feedback. The dissertation chair will review the draft, return any revision or edit instructions, and direct the student whether they must have those revisions or edits approved before continuing to the next step. When the dissertation chair approves the draft as presented, students may continue to step 3.

3. A minimum of 5 weeks *before* the date of the student's planned dissertation defense, the student is required to submit a complete draft of their dissertation to their entire dissertation committee for review and feedback. Members of the dissertation committee will review the draft, return any revision or edits instructions, and inform the student whether they must have those revisions or edits approved before continuing to the next step.

4. After receiving approval for moving forward to the defense stage from all members of the dissertation committee, the student will finalize their scheduled dissertation defense date and alert the Graduate School as required.

5. A minimum of 2 weeks *before* the date of the student's scheduled dissertation defense, the student is required to submit their complete dissertation to their entire dissertation committee.

Announcing the Dissertation Defense.
It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their dissertation defense's date, time and location is sufficiently advertised to the public. Per Graduate School rules, at least two weeks prior to a defense, the student must submit a form requesting approval of the scheduled date and time. When the approval form request is received, the time and location of the defense is added to the Graduate School Calendar of Events. Students are

responsible for checking the Graduate School's online calendar to ensure that information has been entered. The student must also announce the date and time of a thesis or dissertation defense to the department (faculty and graduate students) via e-mail at least one week prior to the date of the defense.

The Final Dissertation Defense.
The final dissertation defense is a public defense that must be advertised according to Graduate School guidelines. Students will present about their dissertation project for 15-20 minutes, covering each of the major components of the dissertation, then will first answer questions from the committee and next answer questions from the additional audience members. After the student and non-committee members leave the room, the committee will determine whether the student has passed the dissertation defense and what—if any—edits are required. The student must then follow Graduate School procedures for final formatting and submission of the dissertation.

D. Progress through the Program

D1. Grading Policies for Course Work in the Medical Sociology Graduate Programs

Receipt of Grades of C or F
- Receipt of a grade of C or F in a required course will require retaking the course.
- Receipt of a grade of C or F in two or more required courses will result in termination from the graduate program in Medical Sociology.
- Letter grades may not be assigned in PNP (Pass-Nonpass) courses, but receipt of an NP will place students on academic probation (unless the NP is offset by a P). However, these evaluations are not calculated into the student's grade point average.
- The Registrar's Office automatically converts an I (Incomplete) to F (Fail) if an Incomplete is not changed before the end of the next term. For an Incomplete to be changed to an acceptable grade, the respective course requirements must be met before the end of the following term in which the course was first taken. Specific requirements will be stipulated in the Incomplete Grade Contract form, completed and signed by both the student and faculty member.
- Any graduate student completing a course with a performance below the C level will receive a grade of F; the Graduate School does not use the grade of a D.

Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements
In order to consistently remain in good academic standing within the Medical Sociology Graduate Program of the Department of Sociology, students must maintain a 3.3 GPA. Entering students will be allowed two semesters to establish this minimum GPA. If a student's cumulative grade point average falls below a 3.3 in any semester thereafter, a

probationary semester will be initiated so that the student will have an opportunity to reestablish the minimum requirements for good academic standing. If minimum requirements remain unsatisfied, departmental funding may be cancelled or restricted for the student at the discretion of the Graduate Program Committee. If a student allows their cumulative GPA to drop below 3.00 at any time, departmental funding will be cancelled or restricted immediately by departmental administration with no probationary period. Additionally, a cumulative GPA of 3.3 is required for conferral of graduate degrees. Students who do not meet this requirement for program completion are to be evaluated by the Graduate Program Committee on a case-by-case basis.

D2. Length of Time Permitted for Degree Completion

The length of time permitted for all students from entry into the graduate program in medical sociology to degree completion before recertification, such as reexamination or required additional coursework, is seven years. Such re-examination or certification may be waived under extraordinary circumstances by permission of the Graduate Program Committee and approval by the Graduate School. The most desirable timeframe for completion of the program is four to five years, since funding is typically available through the fourth year. Additional restrictions of time to completion exist within the Graduate School policies, including 5 years matriculation for master's, and 7 years matriculation for doctoral students. See "Time Limitations" in the UAB Graduate Course Catalog.

D3. Probation and Dismissal Policy

Mandatory criteria for academic standing, probation, and dismissal are determined by the Graduate School, and students are expected to review these policies. In addition, the Sociology faculty sets additional criteria for satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance, with unsatisfactory performance having the possibility of leading to probation and/or dismissal from the program. As discussed in section F. Yearly Graduate Student Evaluations, students who receive "Below Expectations" on any single criteria will be placed on Probation. When a student is placed on probation, a letter from the Graduate Program Director is sent to the student and the Graduate School. The student will meet with the Graduate Committee (including the Graduate Program Director), the Department Chair, and their Thesis/Dissertation Advisor regarding their probation status and expectations for continuing in the program. The same procedures are followed for removing the student from probation. A student who is placed on probation will be informed of the areas below expectations and given a deadline to meet expectations in this area. If the deadline is not met, the decision to extend the deadline or dismiss the student from the program is at the discretion of the Graduate Committee. More discussion of potential causes for dismissal is in Section G.3: *Disciplinary Action and Misconduct Policies*. In specific cases, as discussed in Section G.3, students may be dismissed from the program without being first placed on probation.

D4. Leave of Absence Policy

Leaves of absence will be considered and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Requests for leave of absence must be submitted to the Graduate Program Director, the Chair of the Department of Sociology, the student's thesis/dissertation, and the Graduate School. Reentry into the graduate program must be negotiated at the time that leave is requested. Per Graduate School policy, a student absent for more than one year must complete a readmission application. Reentry may be restricted to meet course sequence requirements, and the student will be required to reenter the program at the same point in the curriculum at which they left. In cases of absence for more than one year, any curriculum modifications instituted since departure from the program will for completion of degree requirements and subsequent conferral of the graduate degree.

E. Professionalization Expectations

E1. Professionalization

Students are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the PhD Students Expectations document, included on the Department website. These expectations are regularly reviewed and discussed with the students' advisor (Temporary, Thesis, and/or Dissertation). Failure to adhere to these expectations will be discussed in the "Professional Activity" section of the Yearly Graduate Student Evaluations (see Section F), and, if not meeting expectations, will result in probation (see Section D3). Students on departmental assistantships are required to attend departmental events.

E2. Academic Conference Policy

Students are encouraged to attend Sociology or related conferences. The Department of Sociology will make every effort to provide reimbursement for a specified amount announced each year for conferences, based on funding availability. These include American Sociological Association, major regional conference in Sociology or related fields (e.g., Southern Sociological Society, Southern Demographic Association), or the Population Association of America. Students represent the Department of Sociology at UAB. Therefore, sociology must be at least one of the affiliations for registration. Students confer with the graduate committee if they are unclear if the conference they are interested in will be covered. Students must be an author on a paper, an organizer, or discussant and must provide a copy of the conference program as verification for reimbursement. To be eligible for reimbursement, students must receive advance review and approval of their submission by a member of the faculty which must be forwarded to the Graduate Program Director. This approval must be signed on the Academic Conference Approval Form (see Department website). Students are also required to participate in any pre-conference discussions and practice talks in the department. A complete pre-travel approval package (see UAB website) must be sent electronically to the Graduate Program Director for

approval before any travel arrangements are made. Pre-travel approvals are filed with the Sociology business office which later processes travel reimbursement upon electronic submission of all required paperwork. Students are expected to notify the Department of the day and time of their presentation.

F. Yearly Graduate Student Evaluations

The Graduate Program Committee conducts yearly evaluations in the Spring semester. Students submit an updated CV and an annual evaluation form. Additionally, the department collects transcripts and faculty evaluations for each student. Thesis/dissertation advisors submit an additional evaluation for all students four years or longer in the program. In annual review periods in which a student defends a thesis or dissertation proposal or defends a final thesis, an additional thesis/dissertation evaluation form will be submitted by each faculty member serving on the student's committee. An evaluation file is assembled for each student.

Each faculty member submits a confidential evaluation for each student for whom they (1) serve as the student's thesis/dissertation advisor; (2) serve on the student's thesis/dissertation committee member; (3) supervise as a GRA/GTA; (4) mentor or work with in another capacity (e.g., on research project); (5) have taught in the previous evaluation period; or (6) otherwise feel qualified to submit an evaluation. The Graduate Program Director provides all faculty with the template for evaluation.

The Graduate Program Committee will review each evaluation file. The Graduate Program Committee will assess the following criteria for each student's evaluation:

- Progress in the Program;
- Assistantship Evaluation (if applicable);
- Professional Activity;
- Grade Point Average (GPA).

The Graduate Program Committee will consider the full evaluation file for each criteria for example, items assessed on faculty evaluations may relate to *Progress in the Program* or *Professional Activity*, and information provided by the student on their annual evaluation form may relate to *Progress in the Program*, *GPA*, and *Professional Activity*.

For each evaluation criteria, the Graduate Program Committee will designate the student as "Exceeds Expectations," "Meets Expectations, or "Below Expectations." A student who receives "Below Expectations" on any single criteria will be placed on Probation.

The Graduate Program Committee will issue a letter summarizing the assessed evaluation criteria, the student's accomplishments, any noted areas of concern, and the outcome of the student's annual evaluation. The letter will be placed in the student's file and a copy will be sent to the student and their thesis/dissertation advisor.

G. Miscellaneous Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures

G1. UAB Shared Values Statement

Collaboration, integrity, respect, and excellence are core values of our institution and affirm what it means to be a UAB community member. A key foundation of UAB is diversity. At UAB, everybody counts every day. UAB is committed to fostering a respectful, accessible, and open campus environment. We value every member of our campus and the richly different perspectives, characteristics, and life experiences that contribute to UAB's unique environment. UAB values and cultivates access, engagement, and opportunity in our research, learning, clinical, and work environments. Our Department aims to create an open and welcoming environment and to support the success of all UAB community members.

G2. Student Conduct Code

The purpose of the University of Alabama at Birmingham ("University") student conduct process is to support the vision, mission, and shared values of the University and the tenets of the University's creed, The Blazer Way. Through a student-focused and learning-centered lens, the process strives to uphold individual and community standards; foster an environment of personal accountability for decisions; promote personal growth and development of life skills; and care for the well-being, health, safety, and property of all members of the University community.

The Student Conduct Code ("Code") describes the standards of behavior for all students and student organizations and outlines students' rights and the process for adjudicating alleged violations. It is set forth in writing in order to give general notice of non-academic prohibited conduct. The Code should be read broadly and is not designed to define non-academic conduct in exhaustive terms. All students and student organizations are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the Code. The current version of the Code, which may be revised periodically, is available from the Office of Community Standards & Student Accountability.

G3. Disciplinary Action and Misconduct Policy

The Department of Sociology asserts herein that it follows its own procedures for establishing academic misconduct and appealing disciplinary actions. The Department of Sociology also asserts herein that it retains the right to expel a student from the graduate program for a first offense of misconduct.

Definition of Misconduct
While it is impossible to outline all conceivable instances of misconduct, situations involving plagiarism or unethical practices qualify as academic/professional misconduct. The Graduate School of the University of Alabama at Birmingham maintains a

comprehensive list of potential instances of misconduct (including falsification of records, unethical practices in research and other scholarly activities, sexual harassment, comprehensive exam cheating, abuse of controlled substances, and computer software use and copying) that is available through the Graduate School. In addition, the Department of Sociology expects its graduate students to adhere to professional ethics as outlined by the American Sociological Association on their ethics website and in the ASA Code of Ethics. All graduate students enrolled in the Department of Sociology are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with these policies and statements of professional ethics, as offending parties will be solely responsible (within the department and the Graduate School) for any instances of misconduct. Moreover, any other actions deemed by the faculty of the medical sociology graduate program in the UAB Department of Sociology to be unethical, offensive, or unscrupulous will subject the offending student to disciplinary action within the department and/or the Graduate School. In addition, graduate students who wish to file a complaint against faculty should follow Graduate School guidelines.

Disciplinary Procedures, Actions, and Appeals
In all matters related to allegations of misconduct, those persons involved, including faculty, staff, and students are instructed to treat the information put forward to them in the strictest of confidence. An allegation of student misconduct made by a sociology faculty member will be handled according to procedures described in this policy manual. The Graduate School is involved only when the disciplinary actions of the department are appealed.

If a faculty member wishes to allege an instance of student misconduct, the following procedures are to be followed:
    a. A faculty member notifies the Chair of the Department of Sociology, in writing, of the alleged incident and provides information upon which this allegation is made. (In the case of a course-related matter, the student will be assigned an F while the allegation of misconduct is processed.)
    b. Within 10 days of notification by the faculty member, the Chair notifies the student that an allegation has been made. The student is given 10 days to refute the charges. Within days of this response, the Chair determines if disciplinary action is warranted and, if so, notifies the student and the Graduate Program Director in writing.
    c. Disciplinary actions are determined by a special review committee of the Department consisting of the Graduate Program Committee, the student's thesis/dissertation advisor (with exception of a faculty member who made the allegation), and the Department Chair. If wishing to refute the charge, the offending student will be permitted a hearing before the committee, after which the committee will issue a written statement of findings with recommended disciplinary actions to be implemented by the Chair of the Department.

d. The Chair has the option of taking the issue before the full-time, graduate faculty of the Department of Sociology for advice on disciplinary actions. The Department of Sociology, in concurrence with and by a majority vote of the full-time graduate faculty, may determine that a first offense of misconduct warrants expulsion from the graduate program.

e. When disciplinary action is taken, the Graduate School is also notified in writing. In accordance with Graduate School policy, if either the student charged with misconduct or the faculty member who brought the misconduct allegation is not satisfied with the decision of the Chair, they may appeal to the Graduate School Appeals Board, the decision of which is final. The appeals process is described in the Graduate School Catalog.

G4. DSS Accessibility Statement

Accessible Learning: UAB is committed to providing an accessible learning experience for all students. Students with a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who require accommodations should contact Disability Support Services for information on accommodations, registration, and procedures. Requests for reasonable accommodations involve an interactive process and consist of a collaborative effort among the student, DSS, faculty and staff. Students who are registered with Disability Support Services should contact the Graduate Program Director and all course instructors to discuss accommodations that may be necessary in the program. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call (205) 934-4205 or visit the DSS website.

G5. Title IX Statement

In accordance with Title IX, the University of Alabama at Birmingham does not discriminate on the basis of gender in any of its programs or services. The University is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination based on gender and expects individuals who live, work, teach, and study within this community to contribute positively to the environment and to refrain from behaviors that threaten the freedom or respect that every member of our community deserves. For more information about Title IX, policy, reporting, protections, resources, and supports, please visit the UAB Title IX webpage.

G6. Student Academic and Support Services

- One Stop Student Services provides a single point of professional integrated service to students. The One Stop serves students who need assistance with academic records, financial aid, registration, student accounting, ONE card, and other related topics.
- Student Assistance and Support provides individualized assistance to promote student safety and well-being, collaboration and resilience, personal accountability, and self-advocacy. The Care Team consults and collaborates with campus partners

to balance the needs of individual students with those of the overall campus community. The UAB Care Team helps find solutions for students experiencing academic, social, and crisis situations including mental health concerns.

- Disability Support Services assists students with reaching accommodations for their educational experiences at UAB that ensure that they have equal access to programs, services, and activities at UAB.
- The Vulcan Materials Academic Success Center provides tutoring, supplemental instruction, and other services that encourage goal achievement and degree completion.
- The University Writing Center offers free writing assistance for all UAB students. Get help at any stage of the writing process and with any type of writing. Students may meet with a tutor in person or via Zoom. Students may also upload a paper for feedback (called eTutoring in the online system). During in-person and Zoom sessions, tutors can help you understand your assignment, develop and organize your ideas, use and cite sources, revise and edit your draft, and more. When you upload a draft for eTutoring, tutors can provide feedback on both big-picture issues and detail-oriented concerns; please note that you must upload a draft and assignment sheet to use eTutoring.
- UAB Student Health Services delivers comprehensive, high quality, confidential, primary healthcare to students. Student Health provides testing services and vaccination clinics.
- Student Counseling Services offers students a safe place to discuss and resolve issues that interfere with personal and academic goals. UAB has created a new app (available in the App Store and Google Play) called B Well, that is designed to easily access resources on mobile devices and build a self-care plan. Kognito is a free, interactive simulation-based platform designed to help you talk with someone when you are worried about your mental health.
- UAB Blazer Kitchen at the Hill Student Center provides food and basic supplies for any UAB student in need through in-person or online shopping. Students who can are also able to donate food and supplies to assist their peers. To get more information, visit the Student Assistance & Support website.
- The Office of Learning Technologies provides numerous academic technologies and learning resources for students.
- UAB Emergency Management will be the official source of UAB information during any actual emergency or severe weather situation.

The websites for the following programs within UAB describe additional student academic and technology resources:

- UAB Policies for Students
- Student Academic and Support Services
- Technology Resources
- Student Assistance & Support

Appendix: Handbook Revision History

This Table includes a record of handbook changes since approved by faculty on November 1, 2024. Changes in this Table represent minor policy changes and corrections.

Change	Date Change Approved