

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WORKING TOWARD
THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE
IN SOCIOLOGY**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY**

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The guidelines presented here are intended as an aid to the student in pursuing the Master of Arts degree in sociology at Texas Woman's University. It is the responsibility of the student to become familiar with the expectations and procedures described here and with the regulations contained in the current Graduate Catalog and the Student Handbook. In addition, there are two sources of information available concerning the writing of a thesis, or dissertation: *Guide to the Preparation and Processing of Dissertations, Theses, and Professional Papers*, produced by the Graduate School, and *Form and Style Requirements for Theses and Dissertations*, issued by the Department of Sociology and Social Work. These are both available on the web at <http://www.twu.edu/as/socsw/gradforms.htm>

August, 2006I. APPLICATION/ADMISSION

- A. Application for admission to the graduate program must be made directly to the Office of Student Records Processing, and the Dean of the Graduate School will notify the applicant of admission to the Graduate School and to the sociology program.

The following credentials should be filed with the Office of Student Records Processing at least ninety days before the session to which admission is sought:

1. Completed Application for Graduate Admission (\$30 fee required for first-time applicants, \$50 for international applicants). Effective Sept. 1, 2006, all graduate applicants must use the Texas Common Application, which is only available online (see Appendix A).
2. Official transcript(s) of all college or university credits, and
3. An official report of scores on the Graduate Record Examination.

In addition, all applicants must submit the following additional materials directly to the departmental graduate advisor, Dr. Lisa Zottarelli: a) Two letters of reference, and b) a two to three page statement of intent.

All application materials are reviewed by the departmental Graduate Admissions Committee which is responsible for recommending acceptance or rejection of applicants for graduate study.

- B. Prerequisite to graduate study in sociology is a minimum of twelve to eighteen hours of undergraduate credit in sociology. The exact number of prerequisite hours will depend upon the particular courses which the student has had as an undergraduate. Courses in statistics and anthropology, and perhaps other social sciences, may substitute for some of these prerequisite hours.
- C. The student with adequate undergraduate preparation in sociology will be recommended for admission to the program unconditionally provided he/she:¹
1. Has at least a 3.0 (B) average for all sociology courses and at least a 3.0 (B) average for the last 60 undergraduate hours.

¹ The international student, whose native language is not English must score at least 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). or have a score of at least 500 on the verbal portion of the GRE.

- 2. Has completed a satisfactory number of prerequisite courses in sociology.
- D. A student who lacks undergraduate hours in sociology or who does not meet the conditions stated above may be recommended for conditional admission provided he/she:
 - 1. Has an overall grade point average of 2.75 or 3.0 on the last 60 undergraduate hours.
 - 2. Provisional status will be removed by maintenance of a minimum GPA of 3.0 and/or by the completion of coursework designated by the admissions committee. In the case of provisional admission, the conditions to be met will be given in the letter sent to the applicant by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Students who have previously been admitted to the program and begun classes (but who have been inactive for a period of two years or more must reapply to the Graduate School.

II. GRADUATE ADVISOR/DEGREE PROGRAM

- A. Prior to enrolling for the first semester of graduate work, the student should confer with the departmental graduate advisor who will be responsible for supervising the student's program until a research committee has been appointed.
- B. The responsibilities of the graduate advisor include the preparation, with the student, of a total program of graduate study. The graduate student and the graduate advisor share the responsibility to file with the Graduate School the complete program of study leading to the degree. (Form: Master's Degree Program). The approved and signed degree program should be filed upon completion of twelve semester hours of graduate work.
- C. It is the responsibility of the student to follow the degree program as submitted and to confer with the graduate advisor each semester regarding any changes or adjustments in the course of study.
- D. Should changes have to be made in the degree program after it has been filed in the Graduate School, a form is available for making such changes. (Form: Change in Degree Program)

III. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

- A. Two degree plans are available for the Master of Arts degree. Plan I requires 24 semester hours of coursework, a thesis (credit: 6 hours), and a final written and oral examination. Plan II requires 36 semester hours of coursework, and a final written examination.
- B. Course requirements in the basic areas of methods and theory that must be met under both Plan I and Plan II include at least one graduate course in survey research methods, one graduate course in statistics, and one graduate course in sociological theory.
- C. A maximum of six graduate hours may be transferred from other universities subject to the approval of the chair of the department and the Dean of the Graduate School and provided that these credits are no more than six years old. No credit can be given for correspondence courses.
- D. In general, credit hours more than six years old cannot be applied toward a Master's degree.
- E. Students are expected to register for the graduate seminars which are offered. Under special circumstances, a student may register for Individual Study (Sociology 5913). It is recommended that a student take no more than six hours of individual study. A student may take no more than

nine such hours, with no more than three in any given area of specialization. (On occasion, a graduate seminar does not have the requisite number of students to be listed under its own number, and the students are registered individually under 5913--the Individual Studies number. The above rule does not apply to this situation where attendance is in a regular seminar.)

- F. A student who enters the program with 36 or more hours of undergraduate sociology may select a minor from another discipline. The minor may be in any field and will consist of six semester hours.
- H. There is no foreign language requirement for the M.A. degree.

IV. GRADUATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

- A. After completion of a course in research methods, the student may enroll for Thesis (Sociology 5983) . Prior to the first registration for the thesis or professional paper, the Dean of the Graduate School, on the recommendation of the departmental chair and based on a written request from the student, will appoint a graduate research committee. The committee ordinarily consists of two regular members, one of whom is appointed chair and serves as director of the thesis or professional paper, with the departmental chair acting as an ex officio third member of each thesis committee. At least one member of the committee will represent the major component. If the student has a minor, one member of the committee will represent the minor field.
- B. The first step in the assignment of the graduate research committee is for the student to obtain a "Request for Appointment of Graduate Committee." This and all needed forms are available on the web (Appendix B). The form is taken to the graduate advisor together with a list of suggested committee members. At that time the student and the graduate advisor discuss the formation of an appropriate committee. Academic courtesy requires that consent to serve on the committee be secured from each potential member by the student. The form is signed by the chair of the department. The actual composition of the committee will depend on three factors: (1) the particular substantive interests of the student; (2) the preferences, if any, voiced by the student; and (3) an attempt within the department to allocate a more-or-less equitable thesis direction load to the faculty members.
- C. The graduate research committee is an arm of the Graduate School. Once appointed, the committee assumes the authority of the component with respect to the student's program, including coursework, evaluation, and major study (the thesis or professional paper). Action and decisions of the committee are subject to review by the chair of the department.
- D. The major responsibility for directing the thesis lies with the faculty member appointed chair of the student's graduate research committee (the major professor). It is the major professor who will aid the student in deciding at which point the work being done is ready for presentation to the other member(s) of the committee. The major professor may often suggest to the student that he/she request the help or advice of another committee member in areas in which that person has special competence. However, such "referrals" should come about by the joint agreement of the student and the major professor rather than on the initiative of the student without consultation with the major professor.
- E. Should the need arise, changes in committee membership can be made at the request of the student, a committee member, or the chair of the department. Requests for changes should be written and should be routed through the major professor to the chair of the department to the Dean of the Graduate School. (Form: Request for Appointment of Graduate Committee, with CHANGE OF COMMITTEE typed on the form) Academic courtesy holds that before any official change is made, the major professor informs all parties concerned in the decision.

V. THE THESIS PROSPECTUS

- A. The prospectus typically includes an introduction, a statement of purpose (problems, questions,

hypotheses), a selected review of the literature, and a description of the procedures and data-collection techniques (if any) to be used. Once the student and the major professor are in agreement that the thesis prospectus has reached a next-to-finished state, the major professor will call a meeting of the student's full committee to consider the prospectus and make appropriate suggestions, alterations, or adjustments in the design. The student is responsible for providing each member of the committee with a copy of the prospectus at least ten days prior to the meeting.

- B. Once the committee has assessed the student's prospectus and ability to carry out the research or description proposed, the committee makes suggestions to the chair and the student. The committee decision takes one of several forms:
1. **Unqualified Approval** - if the prospectus is followed in precise detail, the student will not later be faulted on the research design.
 2. **Qualified Approval** - changes may be made under the supervision of the chair without further committee involvement.
 3. **Qualified Disapproval** - the student will revise the prospectus and will meet again with the whole committee.
 4. **Unqualified Disapproval** - the student is urged to prepare another prospectus or to withdraw from the program.
- C. When the thesis prospectus has been accepted by the committee, final typed copies should be submitted to each committee member. To indicate approval, each committee member signs the original copy of the prospectus, which must then be reviewed by the chair of the department. The original, signed copy of the thesis prospectus (approved by the Dean of the Graduate School) is filed in the Graduate School.

The thesis prospectus does not have final approval until the student receives a letter from the Dean of the Graduate School indicating that approval has been granted. (In the case of the thesis, the student should have reached this stage well before the end of the first semester of registration for the thesis. If the prospectus has not been completed, the student should register again for the first term of thesis--Sociology 5983.)

- D. An approved prospectus is required prior to the implementation of data-gathering procedures. Any data collected before the prospectus is approved may be rejected by the graduate research committee.

VI. THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

- A. The chair of the student's graduate research committee (the major professor) assures the Graduate School in writing that any study involving human subjects meets the criteria of the current Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board guidelines established in accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services regulations and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board. (The guidelines are available in the departmental office.) A copy of the letter of clearance from the Institutional Review Board should accompany the thesis prospectus to the Graduate School.
- B. The major professor assures the Graduate School in writing that written permission has been obtained in advance from every person who is photographed, filmed, video-taped, or recorded in any way for research purposes. Model consent forms are available in the departmental office.
- C. The major professor assures the Graduate School that when other institutions or organizations are involved in the study, the student has obtained letters of cooperation from the appropriate officials

before beginning the collection of data. A copy of each letter from such an agency should accompany the thesis prospectus to the Graduate School. The major professor informs the student of the necessity of assuring the rights to privacy and protection of confidentiality of data before the data are collected.

VII. THE THESIS

- A. The thesis represents a report of the results of a piece of original research and should be indicative of the student's ability to conceptualize, design, and execute such research. The term "original" should not be taken to mean "never done before," since replication is often not only acceptable but desirable; however, the thesis should represent something more than just a duplication of already existing information.
- B. The selection of a thesis topic rests with the student. The chair of the student's advisory committee will be glad to discuss the subject of a choice of topic and to offer suggestions until a thesis director has been appointed.
- C. By rule of the University, only students who are officially registered may hold conferences with a faculty member concerning the preparation of a thesis. This rule applies both when the student is in actual residence and when the student is not in residence but is receiving aid or criticism by correspondence. This rule does not apply to those preliminary conferences which are held before the thesis subject has been selected and the graduate research committee has been appointed.
- D. As the thesis is written, each chapter is presented first to the major professor, who may pass the chapters on to the other member(s) one at a time or wait until the thesis nears completion. Each committee member reads the thesis and makes suggestions and corrections; it is the responsibility of the student to incorporate these revisions into the thesis. When submitting the corrected copy to the committee, both the original on which corrections were requested, and the revised copy should be presented to the major professor, who will pass both copies to the other committee member(s).
- E. It is the responsibility of the student to secure a typist who will follow the University regulations in the final typing of the thesis, once it is in a form approved by all committee members. The Graduate School booklet, Guide to the Preparation and Processing of Dissertations, Theses, and Professional Papers is available on the web (Appendix B). It enables the student to prepare a thesis which meets the requirements and the deadlines of the Graduate School. A guide for preparation of the thesis (Form and Style Requirements for Theses and Dissertations) is also available in the departmental office or on the web (Appendix B).
- F. The department requests one copy of each thesis; the Graduate School receives two, which are sent to the library. If the student wants additional copies, he/she must prepare more than three. It is the responsibility of the student to see that all two copies of the thesis are turned in to the Graduate School by the date specified on the "Calendar of Deadlines." (If the student turns in a copy three weeks prior to the deadline, the Graduate School will check the copy and return it to the student for any necessary corrections before reproductions are made. As long as the Graduate School maintains this service, it is strongly recommended that the student make use of it.)
- G. An abstract of not more than 150 words must accompany each copy of the thesis filed with the Graduate School. The abstract represents a very brief description of the findings of the thesis.
- H. Each student must register for thesis at least two times (Sociology 5983 and 5993) but may register for both semesters of thesis at the same time. If the student does not complete the thesis in the two semesters, he/she continues to register for thesis although these additional hours do not count toward the hours required for the degree. No grade is given for the thesis; the student receives an evaluation of "progress" for each semester in which the thesis is not completed and "credit" for six hours when it is. It is strongly recommended that the student devote time to the thesis during the academic year.

Summer terms are so short that only a moderate amount can be accomplished in comparison with a regular semester. A thesis may be completed in the summer (granted the necessary committee members are teaching), but it should be well under way before the beginning of the summer if it is to be completed for graduation in August.

VIII. THE COMPREHENSIVE FINAL WRITTEN EXAMINATION

- A. Near the completion of the student's coursework, both Plan I and Plan II candidates are required to take a comprehensive written examination. The examination will be administered during the last semester of graduate work, normally on dates scheduled by the graduate faculty in November and April of the fall and spring semesters. Persons planning to graduate in the summer should plan to take the examination in the spring. (The student must be registered for credit at TWU the semester the examination is taken.)
- B. An Application for Final Written Examination must be signed by the major professor (or by the graduate advisor if no graduate research committee has been appointed) and filed, on or before the date listed on the "Calendar of Deadlines," in the departmental office with the graduate advisor who will notify the chair of the M.A. Examination Committee.
- C. The final written examination will cover three areas: research methods and statistics, sociological theory, and the substantive area in which the thesis or professional paper is being written. Should the student take the examination before the choice of a professional paper topic (this is unlikely to happen with a thesis), the third area of examination shall be general sociology.
- D. The final written examination shall be prepared, administered, and evaluated by a three-member faculty examination committee appointed by the chair of the department. All students taking the examination during the same semester take the same examination with respect to research methods and sociological theory; the third portion of the examination will vary with the substantive area of interest of the student. The evaluation and recommendation of the examination committee will take one of three forms:
 1. **Unconditional Pass.**
 2. **Conditional Pass** - the student has passed the examination contingent on fulfilling certain requirements to be specified by the examination committee in writing and submitted to the chair of the student's graduate research committee.
 3. **Fail** - the student has failed the examination and may retake it no more than two times, i.e., a total of three times. The chair of the M.A. Examination Committee shall be responsible for submitting in writing the decision of the committee to the student, the chair of the department, the graduate advisor, and to the chair of the student's graduate research committee if one has already been appointed.
- E. In the case of a conditional pass, the examination committee shall be responsible for evaluating the work done by the student in fulfilling the conditions. The chair of the M.A. Examination Committee shall be responsible for informing the student, the chair of the department, and the graduate advisor in writing when the conditions have been successfully removed. If a research committee has already been appointed, the chair of that committee will also be notified.

IX. THE FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION (THESIS DEFENSE)

- A. Upon successful completion of the required coursework, the thesis, and the final written examination (see section IX in these guidelines for information regarding the final written examination), the student will be examined orally by the graduate research committee. It is the

responsibility of the student and the major professor to schedule the examination before the deadline set for the semester in which the student expects to obtain the degree. The examination will involve a defense of the thesis, although relevant questions outside its purview may be asked. It is the responsibility of the student to provide each committee member with a written copy of the thesis at least ten days before the final oral examination. The final decision of the committee, made in executive session, takes one of several forms:

1. **Unqualified Approval** - the committee recommends that the student be approved for the degree by the Dean of the Graduate School. Once approved by the student's committee, the completed thesis must be reviewed by the chair of the department before it is submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.
2. **Qualified Approval** - suggested changes may be made under the direction of the chair of the committee without another meeting of the committee, who will then recommend that the Dean of the Graduate School approve the granting of the degree, subject to approval of the thesis by the chair of the department.
3. **Qualified Disapproval** - the research needs to be repeated or modified or the thesis extensively rewritten with a resubmission and another meeting of the committee. If a second formal defense of the thesis is scheduled, two such meetings may not be scheduled in the same semester. (Two consecutive summer terms are considered one semester.)
4. **Unqualified Disapproval** - the student is advised to withdraw from the program without completing the degree. (It should be pointed out that it is hard to picture the circumstances under which any committee would allow a student's work to progress to the final stage only to make--at that point--either of the last two decisions.) Once the committee decision is reached, the major professor promptly informs in writing the Dean of the Graduate School, the chair of the department, and the student of the results when the decision falls into the category of unqualified approval or unqualified disapproval. The student is notified immediately regardless of which decision is made. A certification of the final examination, signed by the committee, must be submitted to the Graduate School by the date specified in the "Calendar of Deadlines." (Form: Certification of Final Examination)

X. SCHOLARSHIP AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

A limited number of small departmental scholarships are available. Applications are available on the web at <http://www.twu.edu/as/socsw/scholarships.htm>.

XI. TEACHING AND/OR RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

- A. Positions as a graduate assistant (to assist with instruction) are occasionally available, with the number of such positions varying with departmental needs (e.g., enrollment figures, sizes of classes). The Graduate School Assistantship application is available online (Appendix B).
- B. In order to qualify as a graduate teaching assistant, a student must have completed 18 hours of graduate coursework in sociology, have taken the course *Methods of Teaching Sociology in College* (Sociology 5353) or have had an equivalent course or experience in college teaching, and hold a master's degree.
- C. The remuneration for a masters-level teaching assistant is currently set by the University. Current rates of pay are available on the web at <http://www.twu.edu/o-grad>.
- D. Positions as a research assistant are occasionally available to assist faculty members who may hold a research grant.

XII. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. It is the responsibility of the student to become familiar with the various specific requirements of the Graduate School with respect to regulations, final deadlines, forms to be filled out, and so on. The candidate is urged to read carefully the Graduate Catalog and to check with his/her advisor to make sure that all requirements are fulfilled.
- B. For Plan 1 students, a vita must be included with each thesis. The vita is simply a brief biographical sketch and should include: the full name of the writer, the date and place of birth, the names of parents, and any other personal data which might be of interest to the reader. There should also be an account of schools attended, degrees received, publications, and so on. It should also include the writer's permanent address. Below should appear the name of the person who typed the thesis. The vita does not comprise part of the thesis or paper, the page is not numbered, and it is the last page before the blank end sheet.
- C. The student who is a Texas resident should be advised that for the last semester he/she is registered for three hours of thesis only, an application can be made for a "Code 3" designation which allows for a reduction in tuition. (Form: Request for Reduced Tuition)
- D. Texas Woman's University seeks to provide appropriate academic adjustments for all individuals with disabilities. This University will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines, specifically Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), with respect to providing appropriate academic adjustments to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the responsibility of the student to register with and provide medical verification and academic schedules to Disability Support Services (DSS) at the beginning of each semester and no later than the second week of school unless otherwise determined by the coordinator. The student also must contact the faculty member in a timely manner to arrange for appropriate academic adjustments. For further information regarding Disability Support Services or to register for assistance, please contact the office at 898-3835 (voice), 898-3830 (TDD) or visit CFO 105.

Appendix A: Department of Sociology and Social Work Master's Degree Checklist			
Date Completed	Activity	Timing	Pertinent Office or Officials
	1. Apply for admission to Graduate School and to Sociology Program	As soon as possible	Student Records Processing; Dept. of Sociology and Social Work
	2. Verify acceptance to graduate school	As soon as possible	Dean of the Graduate School
	3. Confer with Graduate Advisor	As soon as possible	Graduate Advisor
	4. Approval of course registration	Each semester	Graduate Advisor
	5. Take undergraduate deficiencies, if any	As soon as possible, within 12 hours	
	6. Inform Graduate School of unconditional admission	When deficiencies are removed	Department Chair
	7. Submit degree program to graduate School	After 12 hours of coursework	Graduate Advisor
	8. Admission to candidacy	After submission of approved degree program, fulfillment of any conditions, if any, at least 12 hours of coursework with at least a B average	Dean of the Graduate School
	9. Selection of Graduate Research Committee	After 12 hours of coursework, including research methods, and choice of thesis area	Department Chair
	10. Submit research topic-register for thesis		Major Professor
	11. Submit thesis prospectus	As soon as possible	Major Professor
	12. Have prospectus approved	As soon as possible	Major Professor, Research Committee, Department chair, and Dean of the Graduate School
	13. Obtain IRB approval	Before filing prospectus with Graduate School	IRB
	14. Apply for comprehensive written examination	Normally during last semester of coursework	Major Professor, Graduate Advisor, Chair of MA Exam Committee

	15. Take comprehensive written examination	During last semester of coursework	Designed, administered, and evaluated by MA Exam Committee
	16. Satisfactory completion of thesis	As soon as possible	Graduate Research Committee
	17. File application for final oral examination	Last semester and by date set in Calendar of Deadlines in Graduate School	Graduate School
	18. Final Oral Examination	After completion of thesis	Graduate Research Committee
	19. File Oral Examination Report and Submit Thesis	By date in Calendar of Deadlines in Graduate School	Dean of the Graduate School
	20. Apply for graduation	At beginning of last semester	Graduate School

Clarification:

Graduate Advisor - Department Graduate Advisor
Major Professor - Chair, Graduate Research Committee

Be aware that this is simply a checklist designed to help the student keep track of the major "milestones" in the master's program. It is not a substitute for acquaintance with the Graduate Catalog, the various departmental guidelines that are available, or the "Information for Candidates for Advanced Degrees" that is prepared by the Graduate School.

Appendix B: Graduate School/Departmental Forms

Form	Available On The Web At
Graduate School Application	https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/commonapp.WBX
Request for Appointment of Graduate Committee	http://www.twu.edu/as/socsw/gen_info.htm
Guide to Preparation of Dissertations and Theses	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/degree_completion.htm
Masters Degree Plan	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/forms.htm
IRB Application	http://www.twu.edu/research/irb_denton_materials.html
Form and Style Requirements (Departmental)	http://www.twu.edu/as/socsw/gen_info.htm
Certification of Final Examination	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/forms.htm
Prospectus Cover Sheet	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/forms.htm
Graduate Assistantship Application	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/forms.htm
Application for Graduation	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/
Request for Reduced Tuition	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/degree_completion.htm
Graduate Assistant Pay Scales	http://www.twu.edu/o%2Dgrad/gta.html
Old MA Comprehensive Exams	http://www.twu.edu/as/socsw/maexams.htm
Schedule of Classes	http://www.twu.edu/academics/schedule.asp