



2025-2026 GUIDE TO GRADUATE STUDIES

PhD Program

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Introduction

While all sociology departments agree on many features of training that reflect the fundamentals of the discipline, each chooses certain specialties for emphasis, and each reflects the particular traditions of its university. This guide is meant to help prospective and current PhD students understand the structure and procedures that guide graduate studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cincinnati.

The information in this guide appears in the following five sections:

1. Application to the PhD program;
2. Financial aid;
3. Requirements for attaining the PhD degree;
4. Procedures for probation, dismissal, and reinstatement; and
5. Information on department graduate faculty.

Graduate degrees are conferred by the Graduate College of the University of Cincinnati on the recommendation of the Sociology Department. Therefore, in addition to the departmental requirements below, the student should be familiar with Graduate College Requirements, as set forth in the [Graduate Handbook](#).

1. Application to the PhD Program

Although many of our graduate students come to us with a background in sociology, the Department encourages students with academic backgrounds other than sociology to apply as well. The Graduate Program Committee (GPC) reserves the right to require, upon admission, additional coursework that it deems necessary to make up any deficiencies in sociology.

Completed applications for admission and for financial aid should be received by **January 15, 2026** for admission to graduate study for fall semester 2026. For self-funded students, the department will consider applications until **April 1, 2026** and may offer admission if space is available. The application fee for graduate study at the University of Cincinnati is currently \$65.00, with a \$5.00 surcharge for international applications, for a total of \$70.00. Complete an on-line application at <https://grad.uc.edu/admissions.html>. Just click on the “Apply to UC” link, upload your information and submit.

1.1 Application Materials

To be considered for admission, applicants must submit the first six of the following items; international students must submit all seven.

1.1.1 Transcripts. Students must submit transcripts from all undergraduate work and, if applicable, from graduate programs. The university requires a minimum GPA of 3.0, but this can be waived if the Department and Graduate College agree.

1.1.2 Standardized test scores. Standardized test scores are not required.

1.1.3 Resume or Curriculum Vitae. Students must submit a current resume or CV.

1.1.4 Statements of purpose. Students will answer two prompts: one about their professional goals, and one about a potential research project they might conduct, including how their interests fit with those of department faculty.

1.1.5 Writing sample. Applicants should provide a sample of their best academic writing, such as a master’s or undergraduate thesis or a course paper.

1.1.6 Letters of recommendation. Applicants should submit three letters from individuals familiar with their ability to carry out graduate-level academic work. It is strongly advised that at least one of these letters come from a former professor who has evaluated your work in a course.

1.1.7 Evidence of English competence. English proficiency is required of all applicants whose native language is not English or who have not received a baccalaureate or higher degree from a college or university with English as the primary language of instruction. See <https://grad.uc.edu/admissions/criteria/english.html> for details and for a list of countries where English is the official language and from which students receive an automatic waiver of the English language testing requirement.

Students who must demonstrate proficiency can do so in a number of ways at the graduate level. Most students fulfill the English requirement by taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Testing System (IELTS), the PEARSON Test of English (PTE), or Duolingo.

TOEFL requirements vary based on the type of TOEFL test taken and scores are valid for up to two years. The minimum TOEFL scores required on the paper test is 600, on the computerized test 250, and on the internet based test 100. For IELTS an overall band score of 6.5 is sufficient for graduate admission. For PEARSON a score of 54 is sufficient, and for Duolingo, a score of 110 is sufficient.

Finally, the English proficiency requirement is also met for students who have completed level 112 of Intensive English instruction at ELS Language Centers.

1.2 Further Information

Contact the Director of Graduate Studies (Jeffrey M. Timberlake, 513-556-4704; jeffrey.timberlake@uc.edu), Department of Sociology, University of Cincinnati, PO Box 210378, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0378.

2. Financial Aid

2.1 Types of Aid

The Department provides financial aid for most of its PhD students in the form of Graduate Assistantships (GA) and, for advanced students, fellowships. Assistantships and fellowships include a full tuition scholarship, health insurance premiums, and a monthly stipend. All financial aid offers are contingent upon students making normal progress in the program.

2.1.1 Financial aid amount and duration. Amounts can vary depending on the funding source, but the current regular stipend is a minimum of \$20,600 for the academic year and \$4,000 for the summer, for a total of \$24,600. Assuming they make good progress, students can expect at least five years of funding; however, we occasionally fund students for a sixth year.

2.1.2 Duties. Assistantships require departmental duties of up to 20 hours per week. Students either work as teaching or research assistants for faculty members in the department or, eventually, teach their own courses. Fellowships do not require departmental duties. Duties are assigned based on a number of considerations, including departmental obligations, student experience and qualifications, faculty needs, and student preferences.

2.1.3 Graduate Assistantships. Under normal circumstances, graduate assistants serve as teaching assistants for their first year and then serve as research assistants in their second year. In order to teach their own classes, students must have completed their MA degree, either at UC or elsewhere.

2.1.4 Research Assistantships. Funding for some research assistantships (RA) are provided through faculty grants. Faculty members who have secured funding typically get to choose their RAs.

2.1.5 Fellowships. Three types of competitive university fellowships are available:

1. [NEXT Graduate Scholars Program](#). This is a competitive university-wide fellowship available to outstanding graduate students;
2. [Taft Dissertation Fellowships](#). Both competitive and allocated fellowships are available through the Taft Research Center, funding students for one academic year, with no work responsibilities;
3. [Dean's Dissertation Completion Fellowship](#). This is a one-year university-wide fellowship.
4. In addition, summer fellowships are available through the [University Research Council](#) and the [Taft Research Center](#).

2.1.6 Other funding sources. The department also works to secure additional funding opportunities as needed (for fifth-year students especially). Examples of such opportunities are the Norris Johnson Teaching Fellowship at UC-Blue Ash, adjunct

teaching, and GA or RA-ships at other university units (e.g., Institute for Policy Research, <http://www.uc.edu/ipr.html>). In addition, the department encourages students to pursue external grants and fellowships.

2.2 Normal Progress and Eligibility for Financial Assistance

Funding is always dependent on students' making normal progress toward the degree. Normal progress is defined as meeting basic program requirements at a steady pace (see below). Basic program requirements include the completion of required course work, the completion of an MA paper or equivalent, the completion of two preliminary exams, and the completion of a dissertation proposal. In addition, students must satisfactorily complete the terms of their assistantships each year to be eligible for funding in the following year.

2.3 Limitations on Additional Employment

Because duties as full-time student and as a Graduate Assistant in the Department are a demanding load, students holding Graduate Assistantships may not hold concurrent appointments on or off campus or work in a part-time positions on or off campus that interfere with their program responsibilities, or in any way limit their ability to fulfill the duties of their Graduate Assistantships as determined by their faculty advisors.

2.4 Assessment of Performance

The GPC will, during the spring semester of each academic year, issue a call for student annual reviews, which students fill out and have their advisors sign. Reviews of these documents will take place in April of each academic year and contribute to a holistic assessment of each student's performance and eligibility for funding in the ensuing year.

2.5 Procedures for Completing Requirements

2.5.1 Advising. When students first enter the program, they are assigned a faculty advisor. Students are expected to meet with their faculty advisor at least once a semester. The purpose of these meetings is to draft a course plan for that year, and to discuss the timing of passing departmental hurdles for the degree. Students may keep their assigned advisors throughout their residence in the department; those who wish to change advisors should submit the signed Advisor Change/Confirmation form to the DGS. Faculty advisors can be changed at any time.

2.5.2 Minimum enrollment. Full-time graduate students with university-based funding (i.e., not Taft or an outside grant) are required to sign up for 12 hours of graduate credit each term. Full-time status for students not funded by the university is 10 credits per semester.

2.5.3 Auditing. Graduate students may audit courses with the permission of the instructor. Audited courses do not count toward the credit hours required to maintain full-time status, but they do count toward the credit hours limit per term.

2.5.4 Pass/fail grading. Classes taken on a pass/fail basis will not count toward any of the required course categories (i.e., the courses listed in section 3.2.2.1), except under extraordinary circumstances, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Students may take courses in other departments, or courses that do not fulfill any requirements in the Sociology department, on a pass/fail basis.

2.5.5 Limitations on individual work courses. Graduate students are not permitted to enroll in Individual Work courses to meet the program's required courses. In addition, students may not take an independent study course which duplicates a seminar offered at least once every two years; students are limited to signing up for independent study courses to no more than nine hours during an academic year during the first two years of residence in our program.

2.5.6 Waiver of requirements. Students who enter the program with an MA in Sociology (or equivalent) may request a waiver of the course requirements that duplicate work they have already completed (MA paper and/or courses). If special circumstances warrant waiver of other requirements, the student must get formal, written approval of his or her advisor and then must petition the GPC for the requirement's waiver.

3. Requirements for the PhD Degree

As preparation for academic and other high-level professional careers, the successful completion of the PhD assumes that the student will develop competencies, based in, but extending well beyond, what is covered in course work. These competencies include: (1) broad knowledge of sociological theory and perspectives; (2) in-depth knowledge about specific substantive areas in the discipline; (3) detailed skills that will enable the students to design, execute, defend, and publish their independently conducted research; and (4) the ability to effectively convey this information and these skills as instructors to future students.

3.1 Requirements for Admission to the PhD Program

Students with either an MA (or equivalent) or BA degree are eligible to apply. Students entering with a BA as their highest degree must apply to the MA program and will earn an MA degree while progressing towards the PhD (see below).

3.2 Credit Hour and Course Work Requirements

3.2.1 Credit hour requirements. Completion of a minimum of 90 hours of graduate credit (beyond the baccalaureate degree) or 60 hours beyond the MA degree with an overall B average is required by the Graduate College.

3.2.2.1 Transfer of credits. Graduate students entering the PhD program with graduate work in other programs or departments may receive a transfer of hours to count toward PhD level work in the department. The GPC determines the number of graduate hours from the previous program that is applicable. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation for particular course transfers.

3.2.2 Course work. Students will take a mixture of required and elective courses as part of the program. Students who have already done graduate work at another institution or discipline may request, via a petition to the GPC, that some of that work be counted towards the PhD degree.

3.2.2.1 Required courses.

- Basic required courses

SOC 7005	Intermediate Graduate Statistics	[MA, PhD]
SOC 7010	Introduction to Social Inequality	[MA, PhD]
SOC 7011	Logic of Inquiry	[MA, PhD]
SOC 8040	Qualitative Sociology	[MA, PhD]
SOC 8075	Classical Sociological Theory	[MA, PhD]
SOC 8076	Contemporary Sociological Theory	[PhD only]

- Two advanced methods courses to be selected among the following:

SOC 7013	Intermediate Quantitative Methods
SOC 7042	Demographic Techniques
SOC 8041	Ethnographic Research Methods
SOC 8042	Comparative and Historical Sociology
SOC 8043	Methods of Qualitative Interviewing
SOC 8044	Methods of Media Analysis
SOC 9010	Advanced Regression Techniques

- Teaching Preparation Requirement,¹ which can be satisfied in one of the following ways:

1. SOC 8006 Teaching Sociology
2. SOC 8007 Teaching Practicum
3. PD 8041 Preparing Future Faculty Teaching Course

3.2.2.2 Elective courses. Students must take at least 6 elective courses at the 7000 level or above. No more than 2 of these courses can be taken outside of the department and they must be approved beforehand by the GPC. Independent work does not count as elective courses.

3.2.2.3 Independent work. Students have several opportunities to work independently with faculty supervision. Students are required to get explicit faculty permission before signing up for these classes and should meet with the faculty member the first week of classes to devise a work plan for the term:

SOC 7003	Independent Study
SOC 7006	Thesis Research
SOC 8002	Prelim Preparation
SOC 9030	Dissertation Research (7 hours required)

3.3 MA Degree in Sociology

3.3.1 Students with a BA. Students entering the program with a BA are eligible to receive an MA in Sociology when the following requirements are completed: (1) the completion of at least 30 credit hours; (2) the completion of required courses designated with [MA] above; and (3) the successful completion of a Master's paper.

3.3.2 Students with an MA. Students entering the program with an MA in any field will automatically receive 30 credits toward the PhD. In addition, in the first semester of matriculation, students will meet with the DGS to assess whether any courses taken in the

¹ SOC 8006 and PD8041 count as electives, while SOC 8007 does not.

student's MA will count toward the PhD requirements. If so, these courses will be noted in the student's academic record.

3.3.3 Master's paper. All students in the PhD program must have completed an original research paper prior to beginning work on the dissertation. Students entering with a BA will do this work as part of the MA requirements. The Department will accept MA theses written in other fields and at other universities, subject to approval by the GPC. In general, an MA thesis approved by another graduate sociology program will be accepted automatically. Theses written in allied programs (including, but not limited to, anthropology, economics, or political science) will be reviewed by the GPC to ensure their applicability to sociology. Students entering with an MA who did not do a research paper are required to do an original research paper equivalent to an MA paper prior to beginning work on the dissertation.

3.3.3.1 Master's paper committee. A two-person committee (one chair, one member), selected by the student will oversee the MA thesis. The chair must be a graduate faculty member in the Department of Sociology, and the other member must be either departmental or affiliated faculty.

3.3.3.2 Master's paper defense. The paper must be defended during a meeting with the two committee members. The committee members must have a copy of the paper at least two weeks before the defense. Both of the committee members must approve the paper.

3.3.3.3 Time limits. Students will be given two academic years to finish the MA thesis from the date of matriculation. Students who arrive at UC with a completed thesis should submit the paper to the GPC prior to the first semester of study or within two weeks of approval of the defense of the thesis if the thesis is defended after the date of matriculation. The GPC will render a decision after the next scheduled GPC meeting. Students who arrive without a thesis, or whose MA thesis from another department or institution is judged not to be acceptable by the GPC, must complete their thesis by the spring semester of their second year in residence.

3.4 Preliminary Examinations

Students are required to pass two preliminary exams. One of these exams is a General Prelim and the other a Specialty Prelim.

3.4.1 Notification. Prior to taking any preliminary exam, students must give the Director of Graduate Studies written notice of their intent to take the exam.

3.4.2 General Preliminary Examination. The General Preliminary Examination ("General Prelim") is a three-day, take-home exam, scheduled in the early fall each year, which addresses basic, foundational aspects of sociology. Students are expected to take the exam at the beginning of their 3rd year. The reading list, compiled by the General

Prelim Committee, consists in a list of “core” sociology readings, with attention to inequality as a basic social dynamic.

3.4.3 Specialty Preliminary Examination. The Specialty Preliminary Examination (“Specialty Prelim”) is focused within the student’s area of concentration. Each student secures two faculty members who are willing to serve on the specialty prelim committee. Under the supervision of these two faculty members, the student writes a paper that critically reviews the literature agreed upon with the committee. In this paper, which must be done no later than a year after passing the General Prelim, students are expected to review a relatively wide body of literature that sets the broader intellectual context for the dissertation proposal. The two-member faculty committee grades the exam.

3.5 Dissertation

3.5.1 Forming the dissertation advisory committee. Graduate students must, before the end of the term in which they complete their doctoral examinations, form a dissertation advisory committee. The Committee shall be composed of at least three persons who have agreed to direct the student’s dissertation research. The Director of Graduate Studies should be notified in writing by the student of the composition of the Committee, using the dissertation committee confirmation form.

3.5.2 Committee composition. The dissertation committee must have at least three members, and typically no more than four or five. The Chair and one member (who may also serve as co-Chair) must be current members of the graduate faculty of the Sociology Department. Retired faculty, affiliate faculty, faculty from other departments at UC who are not affiliate faculty, and faculty from other universities can serve as additional members of the committee, subject to approval by the committee Chair(s) and the Graduate College. See the [Graduate Handbook](#) for more information.

3.5.3 Dissertation topics. The selection of a dissertation topic is made by the student in consultation with a dissertation chairperson and the dissertation committee.

3.5.4 Dissertation proposal. Students will write a dissertation proposal that is to be defended in a meeting with the dissertation committee. The dissertation proposal should, at a minimum, (1) clearly describe, with the help of a literature review, the sociological problem to be addressed in the dissertation; (2) introduce the particular research site chosen to investigate the problem; and (3) provide a detailed description of the methodology to be used.

3.5.5 Dissertation defense. Upon satisfactory completion of the dissertation, the candidate presents a public lecture, as required by the Graduate College, and is orally examined on the dissertation by the members of the dissertation committee. The committee members must be given at least 14 calendar days between receipt of the final manuscript and the defense date. Approval of the dissertation requires a unanimous affirmative vote by the dissertation advisory committee.

3.5.5.1 Notification of dissertation defense. Students must provide to the Sociology Graduate Program Coordinator an electronic copy of an abstract of the dissertation at least one week in advance of the oral examination. In addition, students must announce their defense publicly on the Graduate College website prior to the day of defense. See “Announce Defense on Graduate College Website” at <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html>.

3.5.6 Required dissertation copy. Students are required to submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College, in accordance with the Electronic Thesis/Dissertation guidelines available at <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html>.

3.5.7 Admission to candidacy and time limits

3.5.7.1 Admission to candidacy. For admission to candidacy, students are required to maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 for all graduate coursework and must complete all required coursework, preliminary examinations, and the defense of the dissertation proposal.

3.5.7.2 Time limits. Students must complete all the requirements for candidacy within five years of full-time study after receiving the Master’s degree. Once students attain candidacy, they have four years to complete the PhD. Thus, in normal situations, students will have a maximum of nine years to complete all requirements for receiving the PhD degree.

3.6 Maintaining Active Status

3.6.1 Maintaining enrollment. Students who are actively working on their degrees are required to register for at least one credit hour each year they are enrolled in the graduate program. Please see “Certification for Graduation” in the [Graduate Handbook](#). Such students should sign up with their advisor (or a committee member if the advisor is on leave) for one credit of SOC 9030, Dissertation Research.

3.6.2 Leaves of absence. Under special circumstances, students may apply for a leave of absence from formal study at the university for a specific period up to one academic year. Please see “Leaves of Absence” in the [Graduate Handbook](#).

3.7 Petitions to the Graduate Program Committee

If special circumstances warrant consideration of waiver of any requirements, the student should petition the GPC. The petitions should include supporting materials and letter of support from the student’s advisor.

4. Probation, Dismissal, and Reinstatement

The process described below pertains to actions that may be taken by the department against students who fail to perform as expected academically.

4.1 Probation and Dismissal

4.1.1 Criteria for probation. Students may be placed on probation for one of two general reasons:

- *Grades.* Faculty who assign a grade of “C” or lower to a student will notify the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) of this action. The DGS will examine the student’s transcript to determine the GPA for that semester. If the student’s GPA is below 3.0, the DGS will notify the student in writing that of placement on probation and suggest needed improvements in the student’s performance.
- *Poor GA performance.* Students who do not perform satisfactorily in their GA position, as determined by the DGS and the faculty supervisor, may be placed on probation.

4.1.1.1 Probationary periods. The probationary period will last for one subsequent semester in which the student is enrolled full-time.

4.1.1.2 Continuation while on probation. While on probation the student may continue in the program. Students will be dismissed from the program if they receive an average GPA below 3.0 while on probation or continue to perform poorly in their GA position.

4.1.1.3 Evaluation at end of probation. At the end of the probationary period, the student’s overall GPA will be recalculated by the DGS. Students will face dismissal from the program if their overall GPA is below 3.0. The DGS will also evaluate the student’s performance in their GA position and decide if the student warrants being removed from probation.

4.1.2 Criteria for dismissal. The Graduate Program Committee may dismiss a student for several infractions, including but not limited to:

4.1.2.1 Low GPA. A student can face immediate dismissal with no probationary period for receiving (1) a GPA below 2.0 (excluding incompletes) for any specific grading period; or (2) an “F” in any two courses, either concurrently or in different semesters.

4.1.2.2 Poor performance in the GA position. A student may be dismissed for repeated poor performance as a GA in the department.

4.1.2.3 Failure of preliminary examinations. A student may be dismissed for repeated (i.e., twice) failure of either of the preliminary examinations (see § 3.4 above).

4.1.2.4 Academic or non-Academic Misconduct. The Sociology Department reserves the right to seek dismissal of students whose actions are in violation of the student code of conduct, which includes academic (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, fabrication) as well as non-academic (e.g., sexual harassment, destruction of property) misconduct. For details, see <https://www.uc.edu/campus-life/conduct/student-code-of-conduct.html>. Faculty must report all forms of misconduct by students to the GPC. The GPC will investigate the incidents and place its findings and recommendations in the students' files. The GPC may also notify the full Sociology faculty and/or the Graduate College about any misconduct.

4.2 Reinstatement

4.2.1 Petition for immediate reinstatement after dismissal. A student dismissed from the graduate program may file a written petition with the DGS for reinstatement. In making a decision regarding reinstatement, the GPC may consider extenuating circumstances surrounding the unsatisfactory grades or poor performance in the GA position, and the probability the student can successfully complete the program. If the petition is denied, the student has a right to petition the department so that the full faculty can consider reinstatement.

4.2.1.2 Petition for subsequent reinstatement after dismissal. If a dismissed student wishes to be considered for reinstatement in the subsequent semester, a petition must be filed within three working days of receipt of the written dismissal notice.

4.2.1.3 Maintenance of previous grades if dismissed. If a dismissed student is readmitted, all previously earned grades will remain on the permanent records and will be computed in the overall grade point average.

4.2.2 Petition for reinstatement after an absence. Students who have either exceeded the amount of time allowed by the Graduate College to complete their degree, or have not been registered for three consecutive years may, consistent with Graduate College policy, be reinstated in the program. To be considered for reinstatement, students should file a written petition with the GPC. The GPC, in determining whether the individual should be reinstated, shall also determine whether course work or preliminary examinations would have to be retaken and, if relevant, whether the proposed dissertation project is still viable given the current make-up of the faculty.

4.3 Notification and Right to Appeals

Students will be kept fully informed of all decisions affecting their status in the program and have the right of appeal under grievance procedures drawn up by the Graduate College (see <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/policies/grievances.html>).

5. Faculty Information

Our faculty have national reputations and records of award-winning publications, research grants, and leadership of national and regional sociological associations. For information on individual faculty members, visit <https://www.artsci.uc.edu/departments/sociology/fac-staff.html>.

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