University of
# CINCINNATI
Department of Sociology

# Review Criteria for Applications to MA and PhD Programs in Sociology

## I.     Introduction

The Department of Sociology at the University of Cincinnati (UC) conducts comprehensive reviews of all application materials for the master's (MA) and doctoral (PhD) degrees in Sociology. This document (1) lists the basic requirements for admission and required application materials, and (2) details the review criteria used for deciding upon admission offers for MA and PhD applicants and Graduate Assistant (GA) funding offers for PhD applicants who seek funding.

## II.     Basic Requirements for Admission

The following criteria must be satisfied to be considered for admission to either the MA or PhD programs:

1. *Complete application, submitted by the relevant deadline*. The Department cannot review any incomplete application after the published deadlines, which are as follows:

   - For PhD applicants who wish to be considered for funding, the deadline is January 15 of the year in which they wish to enroll (e.g., January 15, 2025 for fall 2025 admission).
   - For (1) PhD applicants who do not wish to be considered for funding, and (2) all MA applicants (the department **does not provide funding** for MA students), the deadline is April 1 of the year in which they wish to enroll (e.g., April 1, 2025 for fall 2025 admission).

2. *Completed bachelor's degree* (e.g., BA or BS) from an accredited university.

   - The state of Ohio requires proof of bachelor's degree completion for all graduate students. If a student applies during their final year of undergraduate education, their admission will be considered contingent upon finishing the degree and providing an official transcript that indicates that the degree has been conferred.
   - Domestic applicants should email official transcripts to grad.info@uc.edu. They may also be sent via paper mail to Graduate Admissions, University of Cincinnati, PO Box 210091, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0091.
   - International applicants must submit an official transcript evaluation from a NACES member organization (https://www.naces.org/members). Official transcripts without an evaluation will not be accepted. Transcript evaluations should be sent to Graduate Admissions, University of Cincinnati, PO Box 210091, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0091.

- New students must submit official transcripts or evaluations before the deadlines set by the Graduate College or a Spring course registration hold will be placed on the student's account. Students should submit them by the end of September of the year they first enroll to be on the safe side.

3. *Bachelor's or master's degree grade point average of at least 3.0.* Applicants with at least a 3.0 GPA in either their bachelor's degree program or master's program automatically satisfy this requirement. Applicants with all GPAs lower than 3.0 may still apply, and the Department may seek a waiver of this requirement.

4. *Proof of English proficiency.* International applicants must provide proof of English proficiency and should consult https://grad.uc.edu/admissions/criteria/english.html for details, including a list of countries that are exempt from this requirement.

## III.     Application Materials

The following documents are required for an application to be considered complete:

1. Resume or CV;
2. Unofficial transcripts from at least the bachelor's degree-granting institution, and preferably all other post-secondary institutions;
3. Statement(s) of purpose;
4. Sample of academic writing; and
5. Three letters of recommendation.

## IV.     Review Criteria

An application review committee consisting of Graduate Faculty of the Department of Sociology will use the requirements noted in Sections II and III above to evaluate applications on the following two key dimensions:

1. *Demonstration of competencies needed for successful completion of the graduate program.* The application review committee will assess the evidence that an applicant has the necessary experience, skills, and motivation to complete their desired graduate program. Each applicant will be scored on a scale of 0 to 10 on this dimension on the basis of answers to the following questions:

    a.    Has the applicant demonstrated on their resume or CV that they have acquired skills that would be relevant to graduate study in sociology, such as research experience, work or volunteer experience, or specialized training?

    b.    Does the applicant's transcript indicate that they did well or showed continuous improvement in their post-secondary programs overall, and especially in sociology or other social science courses?

    c.    Do(es) the applicant's statement(s) of purpose provide evidence of intellectual curiosity and identify a clear rationale for attending graduate school, in line with what can be accomplished via a graduate degree in sociology?

d.    Do(es) the applicant's academic writing sample and/or statement(s) of purpose reflect the writing mechanics, structuring of ideas, and logical reasoning necessary to be successful at the research and writing components of graduate education in sociology?

e.    Do the applicant's recommenders provide evidence that the applicant is well prepared to succeed in a graduate program in sociology, and are the chosen recommenders appropriately placed to make such an assessment?

2. *Degree of fit with the academic foci of the UC Department of Sociology*. The department is relatively small in size, and so cannot commit to training students whose interests are far removed from the expertise of the faculty, even if they are judged likely to succeed in other graduate programs. Hence, we seek to admit students who demonstrate a high degree of "fit" with our academic foci. Each applicant will be scored on a scale of 0 to 10 on this dimension on the basis of answers to the following questions:

a.    Does the applicant's resume or CV provide evidence that they are interested in the foci of the department?

b.    Does the applicant's transcript indicate that they have taken courses that correspond to one or more of the department's foci?

c.    Do(es) the applicant's statement(s) of purpose indicate that their intellectual interests correspond to one or more of the department's foci?

d.    Does the applicant's academic writing sample fit with one or more of the department's foci, topically or methodologically?

e.    Do the applicant's recommenders provide evidence that the applicant is interested in topics that correspond to the foci of the department?

## V.    Admission and Funding Criteria

On the basis of the review described in section IV above, each committee member will score the applicants individually and these scores will then be averaged to derive one overall score per applicant per dimension. Then, each applicant will receive a numerical score that is the sum of the two averaged dimension scores. Hence, the highest score an applicant could receive is a 20, indicative of the student with the greatest demonstrated potential for success and fit with the foci of the department. We will then rank the students from high to low and determine the number of students to admit based on (1) how many students pass a certain threshold of acceptability and (2) the current state of our faculty resources.

1. For MA and self-funded PhD applicants, if they surpass our threshold and there is faculty capacity for them to be trained, they will be accepted.
2. For PhD applicants seeking funding, we will offer admission and a GA position to as many students as we have funds and faculty capacity to support (typically 3-5 per admissions cycle).
3. The remaining PhD applicants seeking funding will be placed on a waiting list. As space becomes available, they will be admitted and funded in the order that they were ranked.