

## UNCG SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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### GUIDELINES FOR MA STUDENTS

Welcome to the MA in Sociology program at UNCG! The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with information about the policies, procedures and requirements for graduate study in Sociology and to help you understand the expectations of the Sociology faculty and the UNCG Graduate School. **You should keep this handbook throughout your time at UNCG.** Please check this handbook, the Graduate School [website](#), and the Graduate Bulletin [website](#) for information before contacting the Director of Graduate Studies.

Graduate study is not simply a matter of amassing credits and grades. As a candidate for a graduate degree, you are expected to maintain a high degree of professional involvement in your studies. The Director of Graduate Studies and members of the faculty, especially your thesis or internship supervisor, will advise you on a regular basis, but you must sustain your own depth of commitment.

Graduate courses typically meet in the evening, for about three hours including a 20-minute break. The faculty requires that graduate students will be present in classes and prepared to participate. As part of your professional socialization, we also expect that you will attend as many department-sponsored events as you can. Whenever possible you should plan to attend the annual meetings of professional societies (e.g. the Southern Sociological Society, the North Carolina Sociological Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Society of Criminology, etc.). We encourage advanced students to present their own research at these professional conferences.

### PROGRESS THROUGH THE PROGRAM

**Admission Status will be clearly identified in the acceptance letter.**

**Provisional Admission.** For a variety of reasons students may be granted provisional admission. Typically, students who are admitted provisionally must achieve at least a (B) in the first three courses they apply towards the MA in Sociology. The terms of a provisional admission are clearly identified in the acceptance letter. If a provisional student fails to meet these criteria within the first academic year, enrollment in the MA program will be terminated.

**Admission Pending Completion of Pre-requisites.** Students who are otherwise qualified for the program but who did not take undergraduate courses in data analysis (statistics), sociological research methods, or sociological theory, will be admitted pending the completion of these program pre-requisites.

**Advising.** The Director of Graduate Study serves as advisor for all new graduate students. Once you have chosen a thesis or internship supervisor, that faculty member becomes your academic advisor. Students should choose a thesis or internship supervisor by the end of their first academic year or the completion of 18 credit hours. You should consult with your advisor about course selections. It is strongly recommended that students complete core course requirements within their first academic year in order to remain on pace to complete the program. Note, however, that after a student has chosen an internship or thesis supervisor, the Director of Graduate Study continues to be available for advising and to answer general questions regarding our graduate program that are not addressed in this handbook.

**Full vs Part-time Status.** UNCG considers graduate students registered for 9 hours per semester to be enrolled full-time; however, students whose primary activity is graduate study may take as many as 12 hours per semester. While the Graduate School permits MA students to register for more hours, this is not recommended. Students working full-time should not plan to enroll in more than 6 hours per semester.

**Continuous Enrollment.** Once admitted to the MA program, students must be continuously enrolled for two semesters per year (Fall, Spring, and/or a Summer Session) and in the semester in which they graduate. If a student is not registered for more than 2 semesters, they must re-apply. If a student completes all required hours in the program (33 hours for the thesis option; 33 hours for the internship option) but has not completed the thesis or internship, continuous enrollment must be maintained by enrollment in Thesis Extension (SOC 801) or Research Extension (SOC 803), respectively. A formal leave of absence can be arranged if there are extenuating circumstances. A formal leave of absence does extend the time a student has to complete a degree.

**Time-Limitation for Completion of Degree Requirements.** Full-time students might be able to complete the MA degree in two years; however, part-time students should definitely expect to take longer. The University allows all MA students a maximum of five years from the date of matriculation to fulfill all requirements for the degree. All course work, including courses submitted for transfer credit, must fall within this time limit. The student can take other coursework or the Department can petition that the work be re-evaluated. If it can be shown that the knowledge gained in the class remains current, an extension might be granted. Time extensions must be discussed with your thesis or internship chair and then the student must request a time extension form from the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Summers.** Faculty at UNCG work on nine-month contracts. Although graduate-level courses may periodically be offered in the summer, faculty are typically not available for independent study, to supervise internships, for thesis supervision or for proposal or capstone defenses. You should keep this in mind as you formulate your study plans.

**Enrollment in Thesis Credit.** The first time students enroll for thesis credit, they must fill out an add form and obtain the signature of their thesis chair. Student may not sign up for thesis credit if they have not yet recruited a thesis chair.

## **OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM**

All of the students in the program acquire a general foundation in sociology, and some elect to complete a concentration in criminology. Other special interests may be pursued in particular substantive, applied, or cognate courses and extended in the writing of a thesis or completion of an internship. In the M.A. program you will develop your sociological imagination and the expertise to apply it in a variety of settings (e.g. careers in community college teaching, the social services, and applied research -in both the public and private sectors). Many of our graduates have continued their studies at the doctoral level and have established successful academic careers.

**Curricular Options.** Students may elect to complete a thesis or an internship. Each option is available to students working toward the MA in Sociology and the MA in Sociology with a Criminology Concentration. The thesis option requires 33 hours of graduate study including 6 hours of thesis. At least 15 hours must be at the 600-level. The internship option requires 33 hours of graduate study including a 6 hour internship. At least 15 hours must be at the 600-level.

**Required Course Work.** All students in the MA program are required to complete the following courses (12 hours):

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Title (credit hours)</u>	<u>Offered</u>
SOC 593 or 599	Thesis or Internship Seminar (3)	Spring
SOC 614	Social Theory (3)	Fall
SOC 616	Advanced Research Methods (3)	Fall
SOC 618	Advanced Data Analysis (3)	Spring

**Area Courses.** From which (9) hours are selected. (*courses usually offered every third semester*).

SOC 571	Advanced Topics in Social Psychology (3)
SOC 636	Social Inequalities (3)
SOC 640	Cultural Sociology (3)
SOC 644	Sociology of Globalization (3)

**Criminology Concentration.** Students in Criminology Concentration are required to complete the following required core courses (9 hours). (*courses usually offered every third semester*).

SOC 651	Criminology (3)
SOC 653	Social Control (3)
SOC 601	Special Topics Seminar (3)

**Elective Courses.** In addition to the required core courses, students choose elective courses. With prior approval of the advisor, a student will select (6 hours) from other 500- or 600-level sociology or social science courses in other departments.

**Independent Study (Special Readings in Sociology).** Graduate students may take a maximum of two independent study courses as electives (for a total of no more than six credit hours). Note that this limit is set by the Graduate School and not by the Sociology Department. Note also that students may not take two independent studies during the same semester. Students must receive approval from the supervising instructor, Chair of their thesis or non-thesis committee as well as approval from the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Transfer Credit.** No more than one-third of required hours may be transferred from other accredited Universities and then only by permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Capstone Experiences.** In lieu of a comprehensive examination, the capstone experience of the MA program is either a thesis or an internship paper. These alternatives are discussed in further detail below.

**Timely Progress.** Students are expected to make timely progress through the program. Students who do not complete their capstone project in a reasonable time frame may be put on a contract with firm deadlines for completion

### CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE — THESIS

Students may elect to write a thesis based on the independent research carried out under the direction of a thesis chair. The thesis option requires taking Sociology 593: Thesis Seminar (3 credits where a grade will be given at the end of the course) and Sociology 699 (6 hours); however unlike a course, a thesis does not end automatically with the completion of the 6 hours of thesis credit or the end of a semester. A successful defense of a thesis occurs on two levels: (1) there must be a thesis proposal defense whereby thesis committee members and graduate student formally meet to discuss and approve the direction of the thesis; and (2) it is completed when, in the opinion of the thesis committee, the entire thesis is of acceptable quality and is successfully defended.

Each student is required to give the Sociology Department staff an electronic copy of their thesis, which will be kept on file for future students to consult as they write their theses, a practice which is highly recommended. Additionally, the Graduate School requires that each thesis be filed online. Graduate students who write a thesis are required to attend one Graduate School sponsored training session workshop on “filing a thesis online.” Students considering continuing on for a PhD. In Sociology are strongly encouraged to write a thesis.

The following are necessary steps in the preparation of a thesis

**Selection of Committee.** The student must select a thesis committee. Based on the mutuality of interests and willingness to serve, the student should first select a committee chair. The student and the chair then select two additional members. Faculty members from outside the Department may serve on thesis committees when appropriate. Only graduate faculty can serve on thesis committees and prior approval is required to add a faculty member from another institution. Students must determine whether committee members will be in residence (not on research assignment) while the thesis is in progress. Do not ask faculty members to be on a thesis committee if they will be on research assignment. Plan to complete the thesis in a timely manner. A committee member cannot promise to be in residence for years in advance. Students are encouraged to select a committee chair no later than the end of their first academic year or completion of 9 credit hours.

**Thesis Proposal.** Under the guidance of the thesis chair, the student presents a written thesis proposal to the committee. While the appropriate content of each proposal is determined in close consultation with the thesis chair, typically the proposal includes: an introduction to the problem, a review of relevant literature, and a discussion of the proposed research methodology. Students writing a thesis are required to take Sociology 593: Thesis Seminar. A formal oral defense of the proposal is required. The date of the successful proposal defense is recorded in the student’s permanent record in the Sociology Department office.

**Human Subjects Research / Institutional Review Board (IRB).** If the thesis project involves human subjects, the project **must** undergo review by the Institutional Review Board before data collection commences. You will learn about this process in your research methods courses and your thesis chair will advise you in completing the necessary application process. More information can be found on UNCG Research Integrity [website](#).

**Data Collection and Analysis.** Unless the student is using data which were already collected by another researcher or is writing a theoretical thesis, data collection is the responsibility of the student; you should, however, remain in close contact with your thesis chair throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

**Writing the Thesis.** Drafts of the thesis should be submitted first to the thesis chair. The chair will tell you when it is appropriate to share drafts with other committee members. Typically thesis writing involves multiple drafts.

**Thesis Defense.** An oral defense of the completed thesis is required. The final draft of the thesis must be in the hands of the committee members at least two weeks prior to the date of the oral defense. At the time, another copy of the completed thesis must be placed in the Sociology office for public review. Note that the student and all members of his or her thesis committee must attend the defense in person unless the Department Chair, Graduate Director, and Thesis Chair have voted to make an exception.

**Submission of Thesis to Graduate School.** The final draft of the thesis is submitted to the Graduate School, which will examine it to make certain that it conforms to university regulations. Theses must be submitted electronically. Each student is required to provide the Sociology Department staff an electronic copy of their thesis (the final clean version), which will be kept on file. Additionally, the Graduate School requires that each thesis be filed online. Graduate students who write a thesis are required to attend one Graduate School sponsored training session workshop on “filing a thesis online.” The Graduate Director will forward MA students the dates and times that these workshops take place. Proof of registration and attendance to “filing a thesis online” workshops must be submitted to the Graduate Director.

**Graduation Deadlines.** Please note that the deadline for the electronic submission of theses is earlier (typically by two weeks) than the deadline for the thesis defense. It is the responsibility of the student to gather information about these deadlines, which can be found on the Graduate School [website](#).

### **CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE — INTERNSHIP**

An internship, when completed as a capstone experience, comprises 3 hours of credit in SOC 599 (*Internship*, offered every Spring semester) and 6 hours of credit in SOC 695, and entails the application of sociological principles and methodologies in a work setting identified by the student and approved by the Sociology Department. (Note that it is also possible for thesis students to complete a 3-hour internship as an elective course in SOC 599). Interns should expect to work at the internship site about 10 hours per week for each week during a semester per three semester hours of internship credit. This means a student completing an internship as a capstone experience should expect to work 320 hours in a setting. Paid internships are acceptable as long as the student is not doing his or her regular job as part of the internship.

Internship students are required to take Sociology 599, Internship Seminar. The internship will be supervised by the instructor of this course, plus one additional Sociology faculty member who will serve as a reader on the internship paper. Internship students will present their work in a capstone forum for the department at the end of the term.

***Incompletes.*** Students who do not defend their internship papers before the end of the semester in which they take their final 3 hours of internship credits will receive an “IP” as a grade. Note that students with IP’s do not qualify for Federal Student Aid.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Plans of Study.** All MA students are required by the Graduate School to update their plan of study forms twice a year. The final Plan of Study form is submitted to the Graduate School at the beginning of the semester in which you expect to graduate. The form is submitted together with the application to graduate. The form must be signed by the thesis or internship director, committee members, and the Director of Graduate Studies. Be forewarned: you should pay close attention to the deadlines set by the Graduate School to apply for graduation. Late applications are rarely accepted. The Graduate School collects a fee when the application is filed. *This fee is not refundable.*

**Keys.** As graduate students in the Sociology Department you should have a key to the Graham Building and the Graduate Student Office. To get your key, you will need to complete a form which is available in the departmental office. Additionally, your UNCG Identification card is synchronized (with the keyless entry device) to allow entry into the Graham Building from the first floor, back side of the building.

**Graduate Student Office.** Graham Room 338 functions as an office and gathering place for graduate students. It contains desks, computers, professional journals, and a lounge area. You should feel free to use this room (and unclaimed desks), unless told otherwise, as a study area or meeting place. The door must remain locked at all times since the room contains expensive equipment and personal belongings.

**Mailboxes.** Each student has a mailbox in the Graduate Student Office. You should check this box regularly as it may contain important messages from the faculty or the University.

**Contact Information.** Each student **must** keep the Sociology Department informed at all times of any changes in your contact information: mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers. You should convey changes in this information to the departmental staff with a copy to the Director of Graduate Studies.

**E-mail Addresses.** Each student is provided an e-mail address by UNCG. University e-mail correspondence and messages from faculty will be via your UNCG e-mail address. For this reason you should check your UNCG e-mail regularly. It is important to note that personal email accounts should not be used as a primary source to receive important University and departmental information. It is not the responsibility of the Graduate Director, or faculty to keep up with personal e-mail accounts.

**Graduate Student Governance.** The graduate students may elect from their number student representatives to communicate with the Department Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies on general issues pertaining to graduate study at UNCG. These include:

- Review of graduate program and policies
- Review of curriculum
- Identification of staffing needs
- Review of prospective candidates for faculty positions

**UNCG's Graduate Student Association.** All departments with graduate programs are invited to nominate (or elect) two delegates to the University Graduate Student Association. The Association holds meetings several times a year. The Association allocates funds for attending and participating in professional meetings, but in order for Sociology graduate students to be eligible, the Department must have a representative who regularly attends meetings. Students seeking funding for professional travel should apply before the Association's periodic deadlines in order to obtain funding. No funds will be considered for allocation by the Department unless the student as already applied for funding from the Graduate Student Association.

**UNCG's Student Government Association.** The Graduate School also elects a student to represent all graduate students to the Student Government Association. As a Senator from the Graduate School, a student has the opportunity to influence policies affecting all students at UNCG. Although we are not required to nominate a student for this role, we have had students run and win in the past.

**Departmental Social Events.** Periodically throughout the year social events are scheduled for faculty and graduate students in the Sociology Department. You are strongly encouraged to participate in these events. They are a way to meet faculty whom you may not encounter in course work and provide an opportunity to enjoy the fellowship of colleagues.

**Writing Policy.** (1) When students demonstrate difficulty writing, faculty will give the student immediate feedback in writing copied to the Graduate Director. This memo will outline the nature and extent of the problem and recommend the student visit the Writing Center. (2) If the problem is not solved by visits to the Writing Center, the faculty member will ask the Graduate Director to write a letter to the student recommending that they seek more intensive help with their writing, reminding him or her that this is a necessary skill for completing a thesis or internship paper, and informing him or her that it is the student's responsibility to take whatever



steps are necessary to develop his or her writing skills sufficiently to complete a capstone project successfully. (3) If the student fails to address these writing issues adequately, dismissal from the program is a possibility.

**Funding of Graduate Student Travel to Professional Meetings.** Graduate students must first seek funding from the Graduate Student Association (and the Graduate School if additional funding is made available) before applying for a supplemental allocation from Sociology Department funds. Preference will be given to students who are presenting papers or serving on committees. Allocations will vary depending on resources available, number of students applying, etc.

**Library Use.** Graduate students may remove books and journals from the Graduate Student office (left half of Graham 338) for 24 hours at a time. Faculty are not limited to a 24 hour loan period.

**Graduate Assistantships.** Graduate Assistantships are highly competitive and offered only to well-qualified prospective students who have completed their applications for Fall admission by March 15, of preceding semester. Graduate Assistants work for a total of 320 hours during each semester, usually with one or two faculty members. They are paid monthly from September through April, but are expected to work during August and May as well. Arrangements between faculty supervisors and students that depart from this typical situation should be described in writing and signed by both parties.

**Course Substitution Policy.** When the Department does not offer a course required for graduation in a given semester, and that course had been previously scheduled to be offered in that semester, and a student wants to finish all non-thesis and non-internship course work during that semester, the Graduate Director, after consultation with the student and the student's advisor, may send a memo to the Graduate School specifying an appropriate elective (or independent study) as a substitute for the required course.

**Internship Grade Policy.** Committee Chairs will not submit a grade for an internship paper or thesis until it has been defended successfully.

**Graduation Policy.** No graduate student will be allowed to participate in either the University Commencement ceremony or in the Department Commencement ceremony unless he or she has successfully defended the thesis at least a week before the final thesis filing deadline set by the Graduate School or has successfully defended the internship paper by the Reading Day.

**Expiration Policy.** Students must submit all requests for extension to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) before submitting them to the Graduate School. The procedures followed will vary across two circumstances: (1) if the student has the support of a thesis or internship supervisor for an extension, and after the DGS has determined that no faculty object, the DGS will endorse the request and forward it to the Graduate School; or (2) if the student does not have

the support of a supervisor, the student must recruit not only a supervisor but a full committee before the DGS will consult with faculty regarding the request. If no faculty object, the DGS will endorse the request; however, when faculty express reservations regarding the request (in circumstances 1 and 2), the DGS will bring the case to the full faculty before taking any action.

**Schedule for Semester in Which a Student Graduates.** (Note: When the time comes, check the graduate school website for key dates; they change each year)

- Apply for graduation by the deadline set by the Graduate School.
- Submit a Final Plan of Study to the Director of Graduate Study on that same day with all information complete except the date of the thesis or internship paper defense and possibly ( in unusual circumstances) the date of the internship or thesis proposal defense.
- Circulate a complete draft of the thesis to his or her committee members at least three weeks before the final thesis filing deadline set by the Graduate School. This draft should incorporate all revisions requested by committee members previously.
- Assuming committee members decide the student is ready to defend his or her thesis, schedule a defense to take place at least two weeks before the final thesis filing deadline set by the Graduate School.
- Successfully defend his or her thesis at least a week before the final thesis filing deadline set by the Graduate School. Invitation to the Department Commencement Ceremony will be delivered to student at defense. File the thesis electronically with the Graduate School for approval. Successfully defend his or her internship by Reading Day. Invitation to Department Commencement Ceremony is delivered to the student at defense. All students must address any concerns raised during the Graduate School's audit of the student's progress by the deadline set by the Graduate School for the clearance of degree candidates (e.g., including the payment of fees owed the University). Thesis students must submit approved online thesis ad original signed title and approval pages to the Graduate School by this date.

## **UNCG Sociology Mission Statement**

UNCG Sociology serves undergraduate and graduate students, the College & University, the academy, and our communities through teaching, scholarship, mentorship, outreach, and active citizenship. We put sociology to work to solve problems, educate students and the public, raise critical questions, and create freer intellectual spaces. Grounded in an appreciation of the complexity, variety, and necessity of sociological inquiry, we are teacher-scholars driven to advance the promise of sociology at every level and in every context.

## **UNCG Sociology Values**

**Diversity, openness, and inclusion.** We welcome and respect differences in identity, social status, perspective, and lived experience.

**Intellectual curiosity.** We use sociological inquiry to empower students to think critically and to cultivate a healthy respect for empirical evidence.

**Social justice.** We investigate how power and inequality permeate social relations, social structure, and culture.

**Community engagement & service.** We value putting sociology to work as a tool to make positive social change.