

Ph.D. Qualifying Exam Defense Checklist

The Sociology Department deadline for Ph.D. students to defend qualifying exams is October 15, during their 5th semester in the program.

- Students officially appoint dissertation committee members by completing the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form in their 4th semester. The committee must consist of a minimum of three Sociology Department faculty and one outside person (academic faculty outside USF and/or outside sociology). Faculty mentors will become dissertation chairs, co-mentors will become co-chairs. Academic faculty who are classified as emeriti, professors of instruction or are outside USF must be approved as affiliate graduate faculty *prior* to appointing the committee. Please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator for assistance with getting approval.
- In consultation with dissertation chair(s), students select two different (not overlapping) specialty areas within sociology that correspond to substantive ASA sections and will inform the planned dissertation research. Specialty areas should be narrow enough to allow for development of comprehensive knowledge in traditional or newly established subfields in sociology, and wide enough to help students develop niches that are recognized and valued in the discipline (and respond to the job market). One recommendation is to develop specialty areas based on substantive graduate courses students are completing during their first and second year.
- Among the dissertation chair(s) and committee members, students select one person each as an “area chair” for their two review essays. The same person cannot oversee both essays. All other dissertation committee members, including the outside person, will be “readers” of the two review essays.
- Students write a critical review essay (typical length: 10,000 words, text only, not including references) on each of their specialty areas, moving from a general overview of the subfield toward a more specific issue or research question. Essays should be written, in style and level of coverage, similarly to an “Annual Review of Sociology” article. They should include classic roots as well as subsequent developments in the field, and they should address theoretical perspectives, methodologies, as well as major findings relevant in the area. Students should present a *critical* review of the literature, identifying weaknesses and gaps, and are encouraged to indicate what contributions their planned research is likely to make. Students will revise both drafts as needed until approved by the area chairs, then forward essays to all dissertation committee members for review. Both essays will be revised as needed until all members agree that they can be defended. Approved final copies of both essays must be emailed to the Graduate Director and Graduate Program Coordinator by the student's dissertation chair at the time the defense is announced.
- Students discuss and set a defense date (recommended length is 1 hour). Dissertation chairs will announce the date to all department members and the public at least one full week in advance. All department members will be given access to a student’s final review essays upon request. All dissertation committee members must attend the defense. Exact procedures at the defense are up to the dissertation chair.
- After a successful qualifying exam defense, all dissertation committee members will sign off on the student’s “Advancement to Candidacy” form which will then be filed with the Sociology Department and the USF Office of Graduate Studies.

AND IN CASE:

If the qualifying exam defense is not successful, the defense of a revised exam must be scheduled and announced again exactly as described above. Ph.D. qualifying exam defenses can only be rescheduled once. If a student's qualifying exam is not considered acceptable at the second defense, the student will be dismissed from the program.

WHAT ELSE?

Ph.D. students who have formally advanced to candidacy *must* enroll in a minimum of two (2) "dissertation" credit hours every semester following their advancement, including summers, until (and including) the semester during which they graduate. This is a university rule.