

Kent State University/The University of Akron
Joint Doctoral Program in Sociology: Graduate Handbook
(revised summer 2013)

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	3
Coursework	4
Program Schedule	4
COMPLETING THE MASTER'S DEGREE	6
The Master's Thesis	6
Thesis Advisor	6
Thesis Committee	6
Thesis Proposal	6
Final Thesis Defense	7
Final Requirements and Submission of Thesis to the Graduate School	7
M.A. Thesis Proposal: Suggested Outline and Guidelines	8
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS	9
Reading Lists	9
Structure of the Exam	10
Exam Schedule.....	10
Comprehensive Exam Grading	10
UA-KSU Joint Doctoral Program Comprehensive Exam Grading Rubric	12
TRANSITION TO NEW SYSTEM FOR ADVANING TO CANDIDACY	13
NEW SYSTEM FOR ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY (begins fall 2014).....	14
Coursework	14
Research Agenda (replaces the comprehensive exam system):.....	14
COMPLETING THE DISSERTATION	17
Dissertation Director	17
Dissertation Committee	17
Dissertation Proposal	18
Examination and Oral Defense of the Dissertation.....	19
Dissertation Credits.....	20
Final Requirements and Submission of Dissertation to the Graduate School	20

Awarding of the Doctoral Degree	20
APPENDIX A: NON-THESIS OPTION (TERMINAL M.A. DEGREE)	21
Substantive Area and Advisor	21
Reading List and Substantive Examination Committee	21
Substantive Examination	21
Recommended Program Schedule - for Non-Thesis MA – Year 2 only	22
Summary: Non-thesis option	22

INTRODUCTION

The Joint Doctoral Program in Sociology has been in operation since September 1973. In March of 1973 preliminary accreditation was awarded by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Final or full accreditation was awarded in April 1977. This unique concept in graduate education allows the student to enroll through either Kent State University or The University of Akron and function as a student at both schools. Students take course work and interact with faculty members from both schools and have access to the facilities located in both departments.

The joint program in sociology leads to the Ph.D. degree. Although the M.A. is awarded in the course of working toward the Ph.D., students are not admitted who are only interested in pursuing a terminal M.A. degree. Students with an M.A. or other advanced degrees are welcome to apply. Admitted students, regardless of degree are expected to complete all required coursework. Applications are considered once a year, during the spring semester, for admission to the program starting the following fall semester. The program is generally intended for students enrolled full-time (i.e., 9-10 credit hours per semester).

Students enter into the program through either Kent State University or The University of Akron. Administratively a student is located in one of the departments but he or she does have certain privileges in both departments. The program is structured in such a way that the major requirements at both campuses are identical.

The daily operations of the program are handled by the Graduate Directors/Coordinators of the respective departments. When students have questions or concerns, they should see the Graduate Director of the department in which they are administratively based. Admission, assistantships, registration, record keeping, and degree clearance are handled by each respective administrative department. Full details on the graduate program are outlined below.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The joint program in sociology begins with regularly scheduled courses and seminars. To maximize progression and success in the program, it is important that students follow the prescribed sequencing of courses. This foundation, which includes a course to prepare students for professional careers in sociology, is supplemented by faculty advising and supervision of research projects, departmental colloquia, teacher training, and a supportive peer environment. Development of research expertise is fostered through required course offerings in theory, research design, qualitative and quantitative methodologies and statistics as well as elective offerings in a variety of substantive areas.

Coursework¹

Enrollment requirements for the degree are 90 semester credit hours. These include 28 credit hours of required courses, 26 hours of elective courses (9 hours in the student's first/primary area, 9 hours in her/his second area, and at least 3 hours outside the student's two areas²), 6 Thesis I hours, and 30 Dissertation I hours. Please note that starting fall 2014, no more than 3 credits of individual investigation or research hours may be applied toward the degree *as elective credits* (until then it is 6 credits). Further, no more than 3 credits of 500-level (UA) or 50000-level (KSU) coursework may be applied toward the degree *as elective credits*. These 500- or 50000-level credits may only be taken at the home institution. Finally, no more than 6 credits of graduate-level classes taken outside the joint program may be applied toward the degree *as elective credits*.

Students who desire to take any graduate-level electives outside the joint program must submit a written request to the graduate education committee in their home department and receive formal written approval prior to enrolling in the class. In the request the student must indicate (1) the course name and number, (2) the department in which the course is being offered, (3) the instructor's name, (4) the official graduate catalog description of the course (or equivalent if the course is not listed in the graduate catalog), (5) if relevant, the department area with which the course is most closely aligned (inequality, social psychology, medical sociology/mental health, and criminology/deviance), and (6) a brief explanation detailing how the course (a) contributes to the student's program of study/interests and (b) supplements joint program course offerings. If available, the student should also include a copy of the course syllabus along with the request. First-year students who wish to take an outside course must explain why they perceive a need to take the outside course in their first year of study instead of taking the course at a later time.

The schedule below reflects "normal" progress in the joint program for full-time students. Required courses may be completed earlier than recommended (i.e., in an "elective" course slot) but should not be completed later than in the sequencing below. More specific information about completing each facet of the program is located in later sections of the handbook.

Program Schedule

Year 1: Fall (10 hours)

Professional and Ethical Issues in Sociology (3 credit hours)
Early Sociological Theory (3 credit hours)
Quantitative Research Methodology (4 credit hours)

Year 1: Spring (10 hours)

Multivariate Techniques in Sociology (4 credit hours)
Elective Course *in primary area* (3 credit hours)
Elective Course (3 credit hours)

¹In addition to the recommended sequencing of courses, students should refine and develop their course plans in regular consultation with their advisors.

² Beginning fall 2014.

Year 2: Fall (10 hours)

Advanced Data Analysis (4 credit hours)

Elective Course *in primary area* (3 credit hours)

Elective Course or Thesis Hours (3 credit hours)

Year 2: Spring (9 hours)

Contemporary Sociological Theory (3 credit hours)

College Teaching of Sociology (3 credit hours)

Elective Course or Thesis Hours (3 credit hours)

(For those entering program without a thesis-based Master's degree in Sociology, adequate progress requires thesis research to be completed and defended by the end of this semester)

Year 3: Fall (9 hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

Elective Course **or** Individual Investigation/Research Hours (recommended for revising thesis or other paper for publication) (3 credit hours)

Year 3: Spring (10 hours)

Qualitative Research Methods (4 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

(For adequate progress, the student should advance to candidacy by the end of this semester)

Year 4: Fall (9 hours)

Elective course (3 credit hours)

Individual Investigation/Research Hours or Elective course (3 credit hours)

Individual Investigation/Research Hours or Elective course (3 credit hours)

(The elective course taken during this semester will bring the student up to the required number of hours for elective courses. While they will not count toward the degree, the student is advised to take 6 hours of Individual Investigation/Research Hours this semester to work on publications.)

Year 4: Spring (15 hours)

Dissertation (I) Hours (15 credit hours per semester)

(For adequate progress, dissertation proposal defended by end of this semester; the student should enroll in 15 hours of Dissertation I for the summer)

Year 5: Fall

Dissertation (II) Hours (15 credit hours per semester)

Year 5: Spring

Dissertation (II) Hours (15 credit hours per semester)

(Defend dissertation by end of Spring Year 5)

COMPLETING THE MASTER'S DEGREE

The Master's Thesis

Completing a Master's thesis is the final M.A. requirement for students who are making adequate progress toward the doctoral degree. The aim of this requirement is to produce a journal-length empirical paper (i.e., a thesis) that can be revised and sent out for review soon after completion of the final defense. In completing this requirement the student may conduct original empirical research, replication research, or secondary analysis. **Care should be taken to select a topic and question that allows for the thesis to be completed by the end of the spring semester of the student's second year in the program.**

NOTE: All research projects must be submitted to the appropriate Institutional Review Board. **No data collection and/or analysis should proceed on any empirical project until the IRB has given formal approval (or exemption) of the project.**

Thesis Advisor

Each student should select a member of the graduate faculty whose areas of specialization correspond to the student's own research interests. Students may select a graduate faculty member from either campus to serve as their thesis advisor. The selection of a thesis advisor may occur at any point in time prior to the completion of the first year of study (i.e., 20 hours of completed course work), but no later than end of the spring semester of the first year.

When a faculty member agrees to serve as advisor, the student should complete the appropriate form and submit it to the Graduate Studies Coordinator/Director of the student's home campus (see the forms page on departmental website). The graduate director will then sign the form, make copies for the student and faculty member, and place the original document in the student's file.

Thesis Committee

The student, in connection with his or her thesis advisor, shall select two additional graduate faculty members within the joint program to serve on the thesis committee. The thesis committee should consist of graduate faculty members from the joint program who are best suited to provide advice and guidance regarding the proposed topic under investigation.

At UA, once the three-person committee has been formed, the student is responsible for completing the necessary form(s) constituting the committee and submitting it to the Graduate Studies Coordinator/Director (see the forms page on departmental website).

Thesis Proposal

A written thesis proposal is to be developed by the student in consultation with her or his advisor. The proposal shall include a statement of the problem, theory and hypotheses, intended methodology, data source and data analytic techniques. Appendices may be included.

The student is to submit the written thesis proposal to all members of the thesis committee no less than 10 days (but preferably two weeks) in advance of a proposal meeting date. The full committee must then meet with the student to discuss and approve/disapprove of the written proposal.

Approval of the proposal will be indicated by the signature of each member of the committee and kept on file in the student's home department office (see the forms page on departmental website). The proposal meeting should occur no later than the semester prior to the thesis defense. Further, the approval form must be signed and IRB approval must be obtained before the student begins data collection.

Final Thesis Defense

When the thesis is believed to be in completed, defensible form, it is left to the discretion of the thesis advisor whether to call a formal pre-defense meeting of the committee or to poll committee members as to the likelihood of a successful oral defense of the document. At least 10 days prior to conducting the pre-defense meeting or poll, a copy of the thesis must be distributed to each committee member. When the pre-defense meeting is held or the poll is conducted, the committee may reject the thesis, require major or minor revisions, or accept it for oral examination. A thesis may be reconsidered for defense as soon as recommended revisions (if any) have been made.

The thesis advisor will schedule the oral defense no sooner than 10 days after the (revised) thesis document has been accepted for oral examination by the committee. **A notice of the time and place of the defense will be circulated among the joint program's faculty and graduate students at least 10 days prior. Any interested departmental members may attend the meeting.**

At the conclusion of the thesis defense, the committee will vote to accept the thesis as is, accept the document once specific conditions have been met, or to reject the thesis. The thesis advisor, and any committee members who wish to do so, will examine the final thesis document to ensure compliance with the committee's recommendations. For the thesis to be formally accepted, all committee members must sign the signature page of the thesis. **Be sure to see departmental website for all necessary forms related to thesis and degree completion.**

Final Requirements and Submission of Thesis to the Graduate School

Students should consult the appropriate graduate school website for required formatting instructions, submission guidelines, due dates, and thesis binding. **It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of the deadlines set by their Graduate School for graduation.** Be sure that your thesis advisor receives a final electronic copy of the completed document that is accepted by the Graduate School.

M.A. Thesis Proposal: Suggested Outline and Guidelines

This suggested outline is intended as an aid for the student and his or her thesis advisor in preparing the thesis proposal. The nature of the problem to be investigated and the procedure to be used in the investigation will result in differential emphases and details on the various outline sections. These should be worked out in consultation with your advisor.

I. Introduction and Statement of problem

- A. State the general problem/question to be investigated.
- B. Introduce the reader to the main goals and contributions of your proposed project.

II. Literature Review

Review theoretical and substantive literature related to your topic. This section should be guided by your general research question(s) and cover the literature relevant to answer that/those questions. In this section, most authors introduce a “guiding” theoretical framework, which may also help to better specification of your final research questions, hypotheses, and analytic approach.

II. Research Questions and hypotheses

State your specific research questions/hypotheses that emerge from the preceding literature review.

III. Methods

Identify and explain the data and measures that you will use to investigate your research questions/hypotheses. The particular research methods employed depends on the nature of the problem and/or the state of knowledge in the area. This should be worked out in consultation with your advisor.

IV. Data Analysis

Indicate your analytic strategy – i.e., how you will evaluate your data in relation to your research questions/hypotheses.

V. Conclusion

Restate the importance of your proposed project and the contributions that completing the project will make to the relevant literature(s).

NOTE: If it is determined by the graduate faculty that completing a doctoral degree is no longer possible or desirable, the M.A. degree may be completed through the “non-thesis option.” Please see Appendix A for the non-thesis process.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Students are required to take comprehensive exams by the end of the spring semester of their third year in the program. There are nine areas in which students may test:

Criminology
Deviance
Family
Gender
Mental Health
Medical
Race
Social Class
Social Psychology

Reading Lists

Reading lists are available for each area on the web pages of both Departments:

KSU: <http://www.kent.edu/sociology/graduate/reading.cfm>

UA: <http://www3.uakron.edu/sociology/COMPREAD.html>

Each reading list consists of two sections: Major and Minor, each approximately 50 references.

Students are required to declare major and minor areas of study. Students declaring an area as their “major” area are required to read the entire (approximately 100 readings) Major Reading List in preparation for the Comprehensive Exam in the area. Students declaring an area as a “minor” area will be required to read the Minor Reading List (approximately 50 readings) for the Comprehensive Exam. **Students should select areas and begin reading as soon as possible upon entering the program.**

Each fall, members of the joint faculty will be asked to reaffirm the exam areas for which they will draft questions and grade exams. This information will be posted on each department’s website by the third week of classes in the fall.

Reading lists are modified every three years. This evaluation will be completed by the faculty in the fall and revised lists will be posted on each departmental website by February 1st of that academic year. In the event of the publication of a very important book or article, that new reference could be added to the list annually at the beginning of each academic year. Generally, modifications will be made to no more than approximately 15% of the reading list (i.e., about 15 entries). Students are responsible for the information contained on the new lists beginning with the exams being taken in the following fall semester after the lists are posted.

In the unlikely event that a reading lists changes by substantially more than 15% (as determined by the Joint Executive Committee), this will be noted at the time that the new list is posted in February. In this case, students who are *re-taking* exams the following fall semester may select

to use the old version of the list. This option is available *only* for those retaking an exam that was failed the prior spring semester.

Structure of the Exam

Except in the case of a “retake” in one substantive area, students will answer six questions – four questions related to their major area and two questions related to their minor area.

In the Major Area, the student will be asked to answer four questions. The first two questions will be required and will focus on Theory and Methods within the substantive area. The student will also be asked to answer two additional questions from a list of optional questions.

In the Minor Area, the student will be asked to answer two required questions focusing on Theory and Methods within the substantive area.

Exam Schedule

Comprehensive exams are administered each fall and spring, with students making adequate progress completing the exam process by the end of the spring semester in their third year. Each December and April, the Graduate Studies Coordinators/Directors will ask students to indicate their intention to take the exams in the following semester (see the forms page on departmental website). Students will also be asked to identify their Major and Minor areas so that the appropriate examination committees can be convened.

At the beginning of each semester a meeting will be called by the Graduate Studies Coordinators/Directors to discuss the specifics of the examination process and to answer any questions that students may have. All students taking the exam that semester are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting.

The Comprehensive Exam process is an 11 day take-home exam. Exams will be distributed at noon on the 3rd Friday of October in the fall semester and the 3rd Friday of March in the spring semester. Students will pick up the exams in their respective home department offices at noon on the designated Friday and return them by noon on the Monday of the second week.

The student will turn in two hard copies of the exam answers and a disk/CD or other electronic copy with a separate file for each answer to each question. Answers to each question are limited to a maximum of ten (10) pages double spaced, 12 point New Times Roman type with one inch margins top, bottom, left and right.

Comprehensive Exam Grading

All graduate faculty members in each fielded area are responsible for grading all questions. Faculty will be asked to identify their chosen areas at the start of each fall semester and this information will be posted on each department’s website.

Each question will be graded separately using the Comprehensive Exam Grading Rubric (see

below). The grades will be reported as pass/fail for each question. Except in cases where the timing of spring break conflicts with this timeline, all grades are due two weeks after the exam submission deadline.

Students must pass all questions to pass the exam. For an answer to pass, it must receive a “pass” from a majority of the faculty members grading the exam (e.g., if 5 faculty members are grading, students must receive at least 3 “pass” grades to receive a pass for the question). In the case of a tie (e.g., four faculty grading with 2 giving an answer “pass” and 2 giving it a “fail”), the answer is graded as a “pass” (i.e., a tie is decided to the benefit of the student).

Students may only take an exam twice. If a student passes one of the two exams (Major or Minor), they will only need to retake the exam they failed. If a student fails the exam twice the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) will make a recommendation to the appropriate graduate studies committee recommending dismissal from the graduate program.

The JEC will notify the student and substantive area faculty members of the final results within 4 weeks after the exam submission deadline, precluding conflicts with the spring break schedule. The report of the results will include an indication of whether the student passed or failed each exam taken along with the comments from each grading rubric submitted. At KSU, the "Report of Doctoral Candidacy Examination" form should be submitted as soon as possible after the student passes both exams (see forms page on departmental website).

UA-KSU Joint Doctoral Program Comprehensive Exam Grading Rubric

Exam I.D.

(examinee i.d.-- area i.d. -- question #)

Faculty Name:

All faculty members associated with the relevant specialty area are expected to assign a grade for each answer *individually*. Each answer is to be assessed in terms of its overall quality in answering the question by accurately drawing on the relevant literature in the area (as represented in the associated reading list). In making evaluations, faculty are to assess the answer's organization, depth, completeness, accuracy and clarity of writing (see below for operationalization of these criteria). Specific comments are not provided for each criterion. Faculty may choose to provide comments to the student and/or the JEC in the final two boxes.

<u>Organization</u>	The answer has a logical order and arrangement of paragraphs, with a logical arrangement of material within paragraphs and a smooth transition between them. The answer does not contain tangential or irrelevant material that detracts from the focus of the answer on addressing what the question asks. The organization of the answer enhances the reader's understanding.
<u>Depth of Answer</u>	Arguments are supported by precise and pertinent evidence and/or citations. The answer clearly demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic or topics.
<u>Completeness and Accuracy</u>	The essay answers the question completely and accurately. All aspects of the question are addressed and answered.
<u>Clarity of Writing</u>	The essay has been proofread and corrected, thus containing no errors in spelling, grammar, sentence structure or punctuation. The use of vocabulary and terminology are appropriate to the answer. The writing style is effective, and the writer's voice demonstrates professionalism and an engagement with the content of the answer.

<u>Comments for the Student</u>	
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<u>Overall Grade for Answer</u> (Pass or Fail)	To obtain a PASS grade the answer needs to be judged as at least "adequate" on its overall quality, while a grade of FAIL indicates a less than satisfactory performance. (Graders may add comments below which are <i>INTENDED FOR THE JEC ONLY</i>).
Pass	
Fail	

Rubric adapted from B.E. Walvrod and V.J. Anderson, *Effective Grading*. Jossey-Bass, 1998; Kathy Feltey; and Marquette University.

TRANSITION TO NEW SYSTEM FOR ADVANING TO CANDIDACY

The joint faculty approved a new system for advancing to candidacy in February of 2012. The new system will be implemented in the fall of 2014.

Students who will have reached their third year in the program before fall of 2014, or who completed their MA by December of 2012, are expected to take their comprehensive exams using the current comprehensive exam system described above. This is consistent with students completing their exams by the end of their third year and maintaining “adequate progress” in the program. As funding is tied to adequate progress, not completing the comprehensive exam by that time can result in loss of funding.

In order to assess the number of current and new students (fall 2013 cohort) who intend to complete their exams using the current process, all students who have yet to complete their comprehensive exams will be asked to choose whether they will complete this requirement with the current exam system or with the new system. The deadline for choosing is February 15, 2014. All students entering the program in fall 2014 or later will complete this requirement using the new system.

In order to fully explain the new system and provide a chance for students to ask questions, there will be an informational workshop in the fall of 2013.

NEW SYSTEM FOR ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY (begins fall 2014)

The following is the description of the new process for advancing to candidacy for the joint program. This will be available starting fall of 2014.

Coursework

The joint program offers courses in four main areas (inequality, social psychology, medical sociology/mental health, and criminology/deviance). To help students acquire "breadth of knowledge" in these areas:

1. Students will be *required* to take 9 hours of electives (three classes) in a first/primary area and 9 hours of electives (three classes) in a second area.
2. Of the remaining 8 hours of electives, one must be outside the student's first *and* second areas.
3. Only 3 hours of independent investigation/research hours may count toward fulfillment of degree requirements. More hours can be taken, but they will not count toward the degree.

NOTE: Students who enter with an M.A. from an accredited institution may petition for elective courses from that institution to count towards these requirements.

Research Agenda (replaces the comprehensive exam system):

Written Product

1. The student will identify a substantive focus (e.g., gender and work) within one of the joint program's four areas (listed above). This is not meant to be as narrow as a specific dissertation topic/study, nor as broad as an entire joint program area.
2. Students will write a 25 to 35 page research agenda paper (exclusive of bibliography, tables, appendices, etc.). This paper must provide a review of the literature of the student's substantive focus as well as a description of at least two research projects that represent the student's research agenda. These projects should address a gap in the existing literature by identifying clear research questions, and outline a research plan using appropriate methods. Ideally, this paper could be modified into independent papers for publication or chapters within the eventual dissertation.

Process

1. It is expected that by the beginning of the third year, the student will have completed at least two courses within her or his first area.

At that time the student will fill out a form to request a four-person committee responsible for evaluating the student's readiness to advance to candidacy. The form shall be submitted to the graduate coordinator at the student's home institution. The student will choose the chair for this committee and one other faculty member. The JEC will invite and appoint the two remaining committee members who will be from the relevant joint program area. Appointed committee members will be invited in a manner that distributes the responsibility as evenly as is possible across the joint faculty. Furthermore, the student, committee chair and JEC should make every effort to ensure that at least one of the joint program committee members is not from the student's home institution.

2. By the end of the fall semester of her or his third year, the student will submit a 5-10 page document (all inclusive) consisting of a brief overview of her or his research agenda/intended projects that will be developed in the longer 25-35 page research agenda paper.

The initial document should not be distributed to the committee without the (informal) approval of the student's chair. Within one month of receiving the initial 5-10 page document, each committee member will send a short, journal-style evaluation of the candidate's general plan, providing constructive critical feedback. Committee members will send this feedback to the chair of the student's research agenda committee, and the chair will collate all of the reviews and pass them on to the student. The chair will work with the other committee members to provide a written summary that will help guide the student through revisions to reach a working draft of the longer research agenda paper. While the chair and committee members are not expected to read and comment on drafts of the student's research agenda paper as it is developed, the student may meet with individual committee members to seek clarification or feedback on the committee reviews. The student is expected to address the committee's feedback in developing the research agenda paper in the form of a supplementary response memo. This memo needs to explain how the student addressed the committee comments.

3. To be considered to be making adequate progress, it is expected that the candidate will complete a final oral candidacy review by the end of the spring semester of her or his third year.

4. The 25-35 page final research agenda paper must be distributed to the committee at least two weeks before the date of the candidacy review meeting.
5. All four faculty members of the committee must participate in the candidacy review, which is expected to last approximately two hours.
6. The first part of the oral candidacy review is designed to assess the candidate's general knowledge of major theoretical contributions, empirical findings, debates, and methodological issues within their identified joint program specialty area (inequality, social psychology, medical sociology/mental health, and criminology /deviance). For a second part of the oral candidacy review, questions and discussion will cover all aspects of the submitted research agenda paper—the driving research questions, the theoretical frameworks, the significance of the projects, the research designs, and dissemination plans.
7. The candidacy review is judged overall as either a “pass with distinction/pass/fail” at the end of the review meeting. In order to pass with distinction, all four committee members must vote “pass with distinction.” In order to pass, the student must receive at least 3/4 “pass” votes. Candidates who do not pass will receive a list of committee concerns.
8. Candidates who do not pass will have one additional attempt at passing. The student must successfully address the committee's concerns, which may involve resubmitting a revision of the research agenda paper and/or successfully completing the oral candidacy review by the end of the following semester. A second failure will result in a JEC recommendation of dismissal to the graduate coordinator at the student's home institution.

COMPLETING THE DISSERTATION

Each doctoral candidate must complete a dissertation demonstrating his or her ability to conduct scholarly research. This dissertation should be an original contribution to the field of sociology. The dissertation work is formally begun upon completion of all course work and the comprehensive examinations.

Dissertation Director

Upon completion of course work and the comprehensive examinations, the student will select a faculty member to be dissertation director and chairperson of the dissertation committee. The dissertation director may be from either department of the joint program and does not have to be the same person who advised the student up through the comprehensive examination process. The only restrictions are that the dissertation director must be a full-time faculty member of the joint program in sociology, and either have graduate faculty status in Category II at The University of Akron or be approved for dissertation direction at Kent State University with an F-4 graduate faculty status. **If a student chooses to select a dissertation advisor who is from the other university, then a member of the committee from the student's home university will be responsible for the administrative details associated with completion of the dissertation.** The dissertation process will follow the guidelines of the university at which the student is administratively based in regard to formatting and completion deadlines. Once the dissertation director has agreed to serve, written notification of this decision to the Graduate Coordinator or Director is required (see the forms page on departmental website).

Dissertation Committee

The selection of the dissertation committee members is made jointly by the student and dissertation director. The members of this committee approve the dissertation proposal, work closely with the student as the dissertation progresses, and serve on the final oral defense examining committee.

All dissertation committees shall have at least 5 committee members, including a member from outside the joint sociology program. A majority of the committee membership must have a status on the graduate faculty that allows them to direct doctoral dissertations (i.e., Category II or F-4). In addition, a majority of the committee members (including the director) must be from the joint program in sociology.

One member of the committee must be from a department other than sociology at the student's home university – this member must also hold Category II (UA) or F-4 (KSU) graduate faculty status. This member ought to be selected so as to be maximally beneficial to the student in the design and conduct of the research, providing a perspective from a related discipline.

Dissertation committees may include other graduate faculty members but these minimum requirements must be met. The dissertation committee should be formed as soon as possible after the dissertation director is selected. The intent is that the committee will have full input into the dissertation project as it is being planned and initiated, not after it has been substantially

completed. At the University of Akron, once the committee is formed (including the outside member) the student must notify the Graduate Coordinator or Director, in writing, of the committee's composition and the title of the dissertation proposal (see the forms page on UA's departmental website). The committee composition must also be submitted to and approved by the UA graduate school. At The University of Akron, this committee notification must be submitted and approved no later than 3 months prior to the dissertation defense. **In other words, the dissertation defense may not take place until at least three months after the form is filed. Failure to file the form three months prior will, therefore result in a delay of a student's defense and, potentially, commencement.)**

Furthermore, at the University of Akron, if there are any changes to the committee membership after initial approval by the Graduate School, the dissertation director shall send revised committee membership lists to the Graduate School for ratification and approval of any changes. Requests for changes in committee membership should include a reason for such change.

At both UA and KSU, the outside member of the committee shall function as a regular member of the committee, attending all meetings and receiving preliminary drafts or chapters as do other committee members. The outside member of the committee is usually someone who may provide additional expertise to the dissertation research from a related field and is also someone who assures that the dissertation process is conducted fairly and that quality standards are maintained.

The schedules of all committee members, including the outside member, shall be considered when selecting a time for all committee meetings, including the final dissertation defense.

Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal is to be prepared by the student and approved by the dissertation committee. The proposal meeting should occur no later than the semester prior to the thesis defense. Further, the research proposal must be approved by the Institutional Review Board of the student's home university prior to the initiation of data collection or analysis

The details of the proposal are to be determined by the dissertation director and committee but would typically include:

1. Identification and explanation of the general problem or issue to be investigated.
2. A brief review of the literature.
3. A listing of the research questions or hypotheses to be investigated.
4. A brief explanation of the major concepts and/or variables involved and their operationalization.
5. The design, methodology and analytic techniques to be used.
6. Expected contributions of the dissertation to the discipline.

A meeting will be held with all committee members and the student to approve or disapprove of the proposal. This meeting must take place within no less than 10 days, and no more than three weeks of the committee receiving the completed document. The proposal can be approved or returned to the student for further revision.

Approval of the proposal will be indicated by the signature of each member of the committee on the appropriate form and kept on file in the department office (see the forms page on departmental website). All committee members reserve the right to withhold their signatory approval until all changes to the proposal have been made and are deemed satisfactory.

Examination and Oral Defense of the Dissertation

When the dissertation is completed, the Dean of Arts and Sciences must be notified at KSU so that a Graduate Faculty Representative may be appointed. Once the appointment is made (KSU), a printed copy in final form must then be submitted to each committee member and the Graduate Faculty Representative (at KSU) for their evaluation. The dissertation director should schedule a preliminary meeting of the committee, known as the pre-oral, to decide if the dissertation is ready for defense. If the dissertation committee and the (KSU) Graduate Faculty Representative judge the dissertation ready for defense, a date and time for the defense will be established. The oral defense date must be no less than 10 days (but preferably two weeks) after the pre-oral meeting. The dissertation director must inform the student of the result of the pre-oral and any changes that may have been requested to be made to the document prior to the oral defense. The director will also inform the student of whether a new written version of the dissertation (or just the modified sections, if any) is to be submitted to the committee prior to the oral defense. If so, such written work should be given to the committee at least 10 days prior to the oral defense date so that the committee members have a chance to review the document.

Notification of the dissertation defense must be sent to all members of the joint program in sociology. This notification must include dissertation title, date, time, place and an invitation to attend (but not vote). This notification should occur at least 10 days prior to the scheduled defense. At the oral defense, the committee and outside Graduate Faculty Representative (at KSU) will examine the student on all relevant and pertinent aspects of the dissertation.

The committee may reject the dissertation document, require major or minor changes, or accept the dissertation. At the end of the oral defense, all committee members will be polled for their vote on the oral defense (pass or fail). A maximum of one “fail” vote is allowed for the student to pass. More than one “fail” vote constitutes failure for the student. A failed dissertation defense may not be repeated. If further changes to the dissertation document are necessary, they should be made as quickly as possible. All committee members reserve the right to withhold their signatory approval until all changes have been made and are deemed satisfactory.

All committee members will affix their signatures to a single form signifying their vote (see the forms page on departmental website). The completed form will be sent to the Graduate School indicating that the defense has been held, and that the student has passed or failed. All appropriate forms must be on file in the Graduate School at the appropriate times. **It is the responsibility of the student to know which forms must be completed and filed, and at what times.**

Dissertation Credits

Students must complete at least 30 semester hours of dissertation credit. More than 30 hours may be taken but only that amount will count toward the degree. These credits will be assigned to the dissertation director.

Final Requirements and Submission of Dissertation to the Graduate School

Guidelines for preparing a dissertation can be found on the home university's graduate school website. These requirements will specify the final details of submission, including binding fees, submission fees, and other administrative details for final submission. **It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of requirements and deadlines set by the Graduate School of their home university.**

Awarding of the Doctoral Degree

The Ph.D. degree will be awarded from the school at which the student is administratively based. The fact that either the dissertation director may be from the other campus does not affect where the degree is awarded. It is usually possible for a director from the other campus to attend the home university's graduation ceremonies and to "hood" the student receiving the doctoral degree.

APPENDIX A: NON-THESIS OPTION (TERMINAL M.A. DEGREE)

If it is determined by the graduate faculty that completing a doctoral degree is no longer possible or desirable, the M.A. degree may be completed through the “non-thesis option.” This terminal degree will be completed through a non-thesis process. Nonetheless it is expected that a student who follows this option will be able to competently evaluate and understand research.

Substantive Area and Advisor

In lieu of a thesis, students finishing under this option are required to complete 15 hours of coursework within a coherent, integrated program of study. The student and her or his advisor will jointly identify and define the substantive area. The course work must meaningfully contribute to the development of expertise in the substantive area. (See below for recommended course schedule.)

The student should select a substantive advisor from among the joint sociology program’s graduate faculty. The Graduate Coordinator must be informed in writing (e-mail is acceptable) of the selection for approval by the Graduate Education Committee.

Reading List and Substantive Examination Committee

The student and advisor will collaborate to form the examination committee. The function of this committee is to conduct an oral examination of the student's knowledge in the chosen substantive area.

This committee will be composed of three graduate faculty members (including the Chair) from the joint sociology program, with the advisor serving as Chair of the examination committee. Selection of committee members should be guided by the chosen substantive area. Committees must be constituted at least two months prior to the final examination date.

Once the committee is constituted, a reading list commensurate with the chosen substantive area will be initially compiled by the student with input from his or her advisor. This initial reading list will then be distributed to the other committee members for their input. The length and content of the reading list is the responsibility of the student and her or his three-person committee. This list is to serve as the basis for a non-thesis oral examination in the chosen substantive area.

Substantive Examination

All joint sociology program graduate faculty must be informed at least one week in advance of the date, time, place and substantive area of the oral examination. Any graduate faculty member may attend and ask questions but only the committee members may vote.

The examination will be at least one hour in duration, but should not last for more than two hours. The oral exam will cover all aspects of the substantive area covered on the approved

reading list and not just the substance of the course work. Evaluation should be restricted to knowledge directly relevant to the substantive area. The details of the examining process will be decided by the committee members.

The examination may have three outcomes: (1) Pass; (2) Fail; (3) Postpone decision. An evaluation of pass means that overall the student has a mastery of the substantive area. An evaluation of fail means that overall the student lacks sufficient mastery of the substantive area. An outcome of postpone decision means that the student has a mastery of most areas but there are one or two important areas in which the student is inadequate. In this case the committee would require the student to study in the weak areas and be examined again in the weak areas only. This reexamination must take place within six months of the original exam. The outcome of this reexamination must be either pass or fail for the entire examination. A failed exam may be retaken one more time. The option of postpone decision is not available once the student has failed it the first time.

The examining committee has the responsibility of informing the student fully regarding the details of the examination outcome. This will be done through the advisor.

Recommended Program Schedule - for Non-Thesis MA – Year 2 only

Year 2: Fall

Qualitative Techniques in Sociology or Advanced Data Analysis (4 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

(Student expected to finalize exam committee and exam reading list by end of this semester)

Year 2: Spring

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

Elective Course (3 credit hours)

(Student expected to complete oral exam in substantive area by end of this semester)

Summary: Non-thesis option

Early Sociological Theory (3 hours)

Quantitative Methods, Multivariate Techniques, and Qualitative Methods or ADA (12 hours)

Professional and Ethical Issues (3 hours)

At least five additional substantive courses/electives within an identified substantive area