



## MA Major Research Paper (MRP) Program Stream Handbook

May 2024

### Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide graduate students in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies with the information they require to navigate the program. This information is mainly available in the Graduate Studies Academic Calendar ([Master of Arts \(MA\) in Sociology \(uwaterloo.ca\)](https://uwaterloo.ca)). The Calendar is the official source of regulation and information. If the information in this handbook disagrees with that in the Calendar or other University Policies or regulations, those sources will be taken as correct.

### Program length

The MRP MA is normally 4 terms (1.5 years). Students may undertake this program full- or part-time.

### Degree requirements

MRP Master's students must complete the following.

1) Six courses:

- i) SOC 700 Sociological Theory or 708 Contemporary Debates in Sociological Theory*
- ii) SOC 710 Intermediate Social Statistics*
- iii) SOC 712 Elements of Social Research*
- iv) At least three other graduate courses with a minimum weight of 0.5 unit each.*

2) A research paper proposal

3) A research paper, approximately 50 to 70 pages in length and equivalent to two one-term courses, that will be orally defended.

Some students may also be required to take additional undergraduate courses or graduate courses as a condition of admission.

### Courses

The MA MRP option requires 6 courses, including the required courses (as above). Courses are normally to be chosen from those offered by the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies ([View Courses \(uwaterloo.ca\)](https://uwaterloo.ca)).

In some circumstances, students can take graduate courses offered by other departments at the University of Waterloo, or by other Ontario universities. This requires permission of the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, as well as the student's supervisor and the course instructor. Usually only one external course is permitted in an MA program.

Students are also able to take a maximum of one "directed readings" course (SOC 789) in their program. This requires identifying a course topic in consultation with a faculty member (normally in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies). While reading courses are largely discouraged, to be approved it must generally be the case that a) the topic area is not covered by regular offerings, and either b) the topic area directly contributes to the theoretical/methodological background required



for their thesis/MRP/dissertation research, or c) degree progress would be hindered by lack of options (e.g., no other courses offered in a term). A written rationale must also be provided. Course instructor, supervisor (where applicable), and graduate committee approval must be obtained. Contact the Graduate Coordinator for required forms.

In order to complete a course satisfactorily, students must complete all course requirements, as specified by the instructor and receive a minimum passing grade of 75%. Students may receive a grade of “incomplete” (INC) on a graduate course, if there is an agreement with the course instructor that outstanding work will be submitted, normally within one term. Evidence of that agreement should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. Grades of INC will revert to “failure to complete” (FTC) after two terms.

If the student does not receive a passing grade of 75% or higher for a course:

- 1) In the case of a required course (SOC 700/708; SOC 710; SOC 712): they must retake the course.
- 2) In the case of an elective: they must retake the course or complete another available graduate-level course instead.

### **MRP supervision**

Students completing the Research Paper option will decide on a supervisor for their research. Supervisors must normally be regular faculty members in the department. The student can be co-supervised by one faculty member of the department and a faculty member from another University of Waterloo or affiliated college department. Supervisors should normally be confirmed by the end of the first term.

Those undertaking the MRP option require one additional reader. The reader is chosen by the student in consultation with the supervisor. This is also normally a member of the Department, but members of other departments at the University of Waterloo or other academic institutions can also be a reader. The Graduate Coordinator must be notified by e-mail when the supervisor and reader selection has been made.

For information regarding the Department’s thematic areas, faculty members and their research specialties, visit the Department’s website: <https://uwaterloo.ca/sociology-and-legal-studies/>.

### **MRP proposal**

The purpose of the MRP proposal is to present a justification and plan for the research, and to give the reader, the student and the supervisor an opportunity to discuss, modify and agree to the proposed plan.

The proposal should be written in consultation with the MRP supervisor. The proposal itself is usually about 15 pages in length. It normally includes some introduction to the research problems, a literature review and justification for the proposed research, research questions or hypotheses (as appropriate), a plan for data collection and analyses, and some discussion of the limitations of the research plan. Proposals often include proposed timelines, as well as discussions of ethical issues related to the research. Note that the MRP proposal is normally approved before submission to the Office of Research Ethics.

The research paper proposal need not be formally defended, but it must be completed and approved by a supervisor and one reader by the middle of the third term (typically the end of June). Once approved, a MA department proposal approval form must be completed. This form is obtained from the Graduate Coordinator.



## MA MRP

Your MRP should be completed and defended by the end of the fourth term (typically, the end of December). The MRP is usually between 50 and 70 pages in length. The contents of the MRP should be developed in consultation with the supervisor. The reader may also be involved in various ways as the MRP is being written. This should be discussed with the supervisor.

### MRP submission and oral defense

Once the supervisor has decided that the MRP is ready to be defended, s/he should notify the reader and the Graduate Coordinator, who will assist with the required forms, arranging a time and booking of a room. The Graduate Coordinator should receive an electronic copy of the MRP at least 3 weeks before the date of the defense. This copy will be sent to the reader and also be made available to members of the university community who wish to examine it.

The MRP defense is similar to the proposal defense. It is open to the Department, the University community and the public, and is normally chaired by the supervisor. The student gives a short presentation (approximately 20 minutes), followed by rounds of questions from the reader and the supervisor. After the defense, the reader and supervisor decide *in camera* whether the MRP and oral defense have passed without revisions, passed with revisions required, or has not passed. If revisions or further work to pass are required, the supervisor and reader will specify the nature of these revisions/work. In the case of revisions, the supervisor and reader will be responsible for overseeing them, and for the timeframe required. In cases in which the MRP has not passed, it must be re-worked and re-defended within a timeframe specified by the supervisor and agreed upon by the student and Graduate Officer.

### Graduation

Once you have successfully completed your coursework and MRP, you must do the following:

- 1) Contact the Graduate Coordinator to request that a Program Completion Form be completed. This certifies that you have met all of the Department's requirements and are able to graduate.
- 2) Complete the intention to graduate form on Quest (see [Graduation and Convocation | Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)).

If you have any further questions regarding the graduation process, please contact the Graduate Coordinator.

University of Waterloo hosts two convocations per year (Spring and Fall), in the Physical Activities Complex (PAC) on campus. You may select your preferred convocation date in the Intent to Graduate form.

### Funding

Student funding is described in the offer of admission, provided through Quest. Normally, MA MRP students receive 4 terms of funding, in the form of Teaching Assistantships and scholarships from the University. Funding is conditional on maintaining an average of 80% in graduate program courses. Information on awards and funding is available from the Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs office ([Current students | Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)).

Student Financial Services resources: [Student Financial Services | Finance \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)



The Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs office also offers a Research Travel Assistantship to cover expenses related to conference travel: [Funding graduate school | Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

There are also external Master's scholarships that students can, and should if eligible, apply for. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the main funding bodies that offer such scholarships:

SSHRC master's awards (CGS): [Tri-Agency \(CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC\) Canada Graduate Scholarships Master's \(CGS M\) | Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

OGS master's awards: [Ontario Graduate Scholarship \(OGS\) and the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship in Science and Technology \(QEII-GSST\) | Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

### **Co-op**

Graduate students may combine academic studies with paid work experience through the Department's graduate co-op programs. Co-op placements normally occur in the third and fourth (Spring and Fall) semesters of full-time enrolment in a graduate program. Students then return to academic study to complete all remaining requirements for their program. Placement opportunities are available to students through Waterloo Works, the University's co-op job placement portal. In some cases, it is possible to have student-found positions approved for co-op credit. While the Department will make every effort to assist students in finding suitable co-op placements, we cannot guarantee co-op employment. Only Canadian citizens and holders of Permanent Resident status may enroll in graduate co-op programs.

If you would like more information about co-op opportunities please contact the Department's Graduate Administrative Coordinator or Graduate Co-op Officer. <https://uwaterloo.ca/co-operative-education/>

### **Inactive terms and changing between full- and part-time**

Students may change between full- and part-time studies with approval of the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Part-time students will normally not receive funding. Students may choose to change their status to "inactive" for a maximum of two terms, with permission of the Associate Chair. Inactive students will not receive funding.

### **Departmental activities**

The department aims to create an environment of ongoing constructive discussion and relevant support regarding its members' research interests and training. To that end, many scientific activities are organized throughout the academic year, including the departmental seminar series, professional development workshops, TA training, etc. You are STRONGLY encouraged to participate and engage in as many of these activities as possible.

### **Social, emotional and physical well-being**

The overall well-being of graduate students is a top priority for the department. The department as well as the University of Waterloo offers a wide range of resources, most available free of charge, to ensure the continued well-being of its students. Below is a list of some of these key resources:

Graduate Student Association: [Home - Graduate Student Association - UW \(gsauw.ca\)](#)



**UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO**  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
Department of Sociology  
and Legal Studies

Mental Health Services: [Home](#) | [Campus Wellness](#) | [University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

Campus Safety and Security: <https://uwaterloo.ca/watsafe/campus-safety-security>

### **Department Graduate Coordinator**

Quinn Smith

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