



## MA Thesis 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 thesis MA is normally 6 terms (2 years). Students may undertake this program full- or part-time.

### Degree requirements

Thesis Master's students must successfully complete the following.

- 1) Four 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 one other graduate course with a minimum weight of 0.5 unit.
- 2) A thesis proposal that will be orally defended.
- 3) A thesis, approximately 100 to 150 pages in length and equivalent to four 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 thesis option requires 4 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.

### **Thesis supervision**

Students completing the Thesis 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 Thesis option require two additional committee members for the defense. Committee members are chosen by the student in consultation with the supervisor. These are also normally members of the Department, but members of other departments at the University of Waterloo or other academic institutions can also be committee members.

However, no more than one member of a committee can be a non-regular member of the Sociology and Legal Studies Department. The Graduate Coordinator must be notified by e-mail when the committee selection has been made.

For information regarding the Department’s thematic areas, faculty members and their research specialties, visit the Department’s website: [Thematic areas | Sociology and Legal Studies \(uwaterloo.ca\)](http://uwaterloo.ca)

### **Thesis proposal**

The purpose of the thesis proposal is to present a justification and plan for the thesis research, and to give the thesis committee members, 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 thesis supervisor. The proposal itself is usually about 25 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 thesis proposal is normally defended before submission to the Office of Research Ethics.



## Thesis proposal defense

The thesis proposal must be orally defended to your supervisor and two committee members. Your thesis oral defense should be completed by the end of the second term (typically the end of April, for full time students).

After the supervisor agrees that the proposal can go to a defense, the student should notify the Graduate Coordinator and prepare a Thesis Proposal Form, to be signed by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. The Graduate Coordinator can help coordinate the date and time of the defense with the supervisor and other committee members, and to book a room for the defense.

The oral defense usually consists of a short (approximately 20 minutes) presentation by the student, followed by questions from the committee members and supervisor. The supervisor normally chairs the defense. Thesis proposal defenses are normally open to other members of the Department and the University community, and to the public.

After the defense, the supervisor and committee members decide *in camera* whether the proposal and oral defense have 1) passed, 2) passed with revisions, or 3) has not passed. In cases in which the proposal has not passed, it must be re-written and re-defended within a timeframe specified by the supervisor and agreed upon by the student and Graduate Officer.

Once the proposal has passed and any required revisions have been made and approved by the supervisor, a MA department proposal approval form must be completed. This form is obtained from the Graduate Coordinator.

## MA Thesis

Your thesis should be completed and defended by the end of the sixth term. The thesis is usually between 100 and 150 pages in length. The contents of the thesis should be developed in consultation with the thesis supervisor. Other committee members might be involved in various ways as the thesis is being written. This should be discussed with the supervisor.

## Thesis submission and oral defense

Once the supervisor has decided that the thesis is ready to be defended, s/he should notify the committee 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 thesis at least 3 weeks before the date of the defense. This copy will be sent to the committee members and also be made available to members of the university community who wish to examine it.

The thesis 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 committee members and the supervisor. After the defense, the committee members and supervisor decide *in camera* whether the thesis 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 committee will specify the nature of these revisions/work. In the case of revisions, committee members will be responsible for overseeing them, and for the timeframe required. In cases in which the thesis 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 MA thesis, you must do the following:



- 1) Upload your thesis to UW Space (see <https://uwaterloo.ca/library/uwspace/thesissubmission-guide>).
- 2) 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.
- 3) Complete the intention to graduate form on Quest (see <https://uwaterloo.ca/graduatestudies-postdoctoral-affairs/current-students/graduation-and-convocation>).

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 thesis 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.



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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 \(gsauw.ca\)](http://gsauw.ca)

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

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

### **Department Graduate Coordinator**

Quinn Smith

Department E-mail: [soc-gradoffice@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:soc-gradoffice@uwaterloo.ca)

Office: PAS 2047

Phone: 519-888-4567, ex. 41953