

Sociology MA

Sociological Competency

Goal Description:

Graduate students who complete the MA program in Sociology will be competent in the area of sociological theory, research methods, and analysis.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS-----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

1. Sociological Competency In Research

Learning Objective Description:

M.A. Sociology students will demonstrate the appropriate array of sociological research skills and competence in advancing sociologically-informed arguments by producing a research paper that achieves the following: identification of patterns of social behavior; discernment of sociology's three major theoretical paradigms (structural functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interactionism); utilization of one or both of the two major sociological methods (positivism and interpretive).

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

1-1. Professional Paper

Indicator Description:

All MA sociology students enrolling prior to Spring 2014 were required to write the professional paper, but could choose to take the Comprehensive Exams or write the Thesis if still enrolled after Spring 2014.

M.A. Sociology students writing the professional paper enrolled in SOCI 5099: Professional Paper Practicum bringing with them a self-chosen candidate paper from a previously taken class. That paper was presented to the director of graduate students for certification of eligibility for use in SOCI 5099.

Student papers deemed proficient by graduate director review were then made the official object of student SOCI 5099 participation and forwarded to the SOCI 5099 professor of record for the given semester.

At the end of participation in SOCI 5099, students failing to demonstrate the required level of content and writing mastery were to be assigned one of two courses of action: (1) work independently to complete the professional paper; and (2) to re-enroll subsequently in SOCI 5099.

Criterion Description:

All participating MA candidates will demonstrate proficiency as defined by the associated 4-point grading rubrics (see Attachments #1, #2, and #3). Minimum acceptable proficiency is defined by scoring an overall average of 2.0 of all graded rubric items as determined by a committee of SOCI faculty. Committee members will not have been professors of record for SOCI 5099 in the semester under evaluation.

Attached Files

- [Attachment_1ProfResPaperRubric.docx](#)
- [Attachment_2ProfRevPaperRubric.docx](#)
- [Attachment_3ProfPaperFormatRubric.docx](#)

Findings Description:

Three students enrolled in SOCI5099: Professional Paper during Fall 2015 and Spring 2016. All three completed the Professional Paper successfully. Subsequently, the papers were evaluated by a panel of two Sociology faculty. The results of the evaluation reveal that all three papers meet the minimum criteria for all evaluation areas.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Competency In Social Research

Action Description:

The data indicate the desired result is satisfied in the professional paper. Although the professional paper is phasing out, the Sociology Graduate Studies will continue to ensure that students who take the professional paper track have competence in sociological research. The Graduate Director in Conjunction with the Graduate Committee has developed rubrics to use for the evaluation of theses. These rubrics will be used for the first round of thesis during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. They will then be reviewed and modified accordingly before the next round of theses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

1-2. Thesis

Indicator Description:

M.A. Sociology students enrolling in the Spring 2014 and after have the option to choose the thesis-track.

A successful SOCI MA thesis will not be less than 50 and not more than 100 printed pages of referenced, original SOCI research or a meta-analysis of existing research including primary and/or secondary data analysis. The thesis track entails two semesters of work. First, students must take and pass SOCI 6098 Thesis Practicum. In this the SOCI 6098 students must write a thesis proposal. Following the successful completion of SOCI 6098, students then enroll in SOCI 6099 Thesis.

Provision of the thesis track was just initiated in Spring 2014. Therefore, three students enrolled in SOCI 6098 Thesis Practicum, and no student enrolled in SOCI 6099 during the 2015-2016 cycle.

Criterion Description:

All students enrolled in SOCI 6098 Thesis Practicum will pass the course by demonstrating competence in writing a thesis proposal (see Attachment 4 for Thesis proposal rubric and Attachment 5 for Thesis rubric).

Attached Files

[!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b_img.jpg\) Attachment 4 Thesis Proposal Rubric](#)

[!\[\]\(de95854c7ee024cfadc48187bbb781b2_img.jpg\) Attachment 5 Thesis Rubric](#)

Findings Description:

Three students enrolled in SOCI 6098 in Spring 2016. All these students successfully passed SOCI 6098 and will enroll in SOCI 6099 in Fall 2016. One student enrolled in SOCI 6098 in Summer 2016. She successfully completed the course and will enroll in SOCI 6099 in Fall 2016.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Competency In Social Research

Action Description:

The data indicate the desired result is satisfied in the professional paper. Although the professional paper is phasing out, the Sociology Graduate Studies will continue to ensure that students who take the professional paper track have competence in sociological research. The Graduate Director in Conjunction with the Graduate Committee has developed rubrics to use for the evaluation of theses. These rubrics will be used for the first round of thesis during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. They will then be reviewed and modified accordingly before the next round of theses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

2. Comprehensive Exams

Learning Objective Description:

SOCI MA students will sit for comprehensive examination as a powerful tool for demonstrating overall student learning outcomes. MA SOCI students will demonstrate competence in applying sociological theories, sociological research methodologies and statistics, and research literature reviews of a selected, substantive sociological field.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

2-1. Comprehensive Exams

Indicator Description:

M.A. Sociology degree candidates will complete a written comprehensive exam. The specialty area will be assessed by an in-depth exploration of sociological literature on a topic of the students choosing, written answers to questions pertaining to sociological theoretical perspectives and appropriate research methodologies. In each case, an examination committee will be convened to discuss the performance of the students. A panel of at least two graduate faculty per each of the three examination areas will assess the quality of the written examination to determine student sociological mastery. Students failing to demonstrate the required level of content mastery will be allowed to retake that area of the exam in the subsequent semester. A second failure will result in termination from the program.

Possible examination grading outcomes are: High Pass, Pass, and Fail (see Attachment #4).

Attached Files

[!\[\]\(066cb4a00c9d9f40edb6f87372ec6f08_img.jpg\) Attach_4.CompExamRubric14.15](#)

Criterion Description:

All M.A. candidates taking the comprehensive exam will complete all components of the examination with a score of High Pass or Pass.

Findings Description:

In Fall 2015, seven students took the exam. Five students passed the exam (two were doing partial retakes from the Spring 2015 exam). Two students failed the exam. One of the students that failed the exam left the program and the other successfully retook the exam in Spring 2016. In Spring 2016, six students took the exam. Four students passed the exam. Two students failed both the Methods/Statistics and Sociological Essay components of the exam. They are scheduled to retake those sections in the Fall of 2016.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Comprehensive Exams

Action Description:

The data indicates that the overwhelming majority of students are successfully completing the comprehensive exam within 2 cycles. Students continue to have the most difficulty on the Statistics/Methods section. The graduate committee is discussing ways to ensure that students are better prepared for this section of the exam.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Comprehensive Exam Track

Assessment of student results on the comprehensive exams from the 2014-2015 academic year found that students has the most difficulty with the methods and statistics section. The graduate director and graduate committee will evaluate student preparation in methods and statistics and the structure of the exam, and make amendments as necessary to improve student success.

Thesis Track

Sociology MA students who choose the thesis degree track will demonstrate competency in research design, sociological theory, application of sociological methods, and data analysis. The graduate director and graduate committee will develop and an implement a rubric for assessing student performance in the thesis track during the 2015-2016 academic year.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

The department chair, graduate director and graduate committee are preparing for scheduled comprehensive program performance review to take place during the 2016-2017 academic year. The graduate director is currently compiling data on student recruitment and enrollment, entry credentials, and student performance for the review process.

The 2016-2017 academic year will see the phase out of the professional paper. While it is true that SOCI faculty successfully led students in necessary skill acquisition, after participation for 4 semesters in the professional paper project faculty became concerned that most students would be better served by breadth of knowledge than over-specialization. Thus, students will have two options: (1) Thesis track and (2) Comprehensive Exams. These two tracks will allow students to choose either a research-focus degree plan or one that provides students a breadth of knowledge.

As reported above, the comprehensive exam process was successfully administered twice during the 2015-2016 academic year. The data indicates that the overwhelming majority of students are successfully completing the comprehensive exam within 2 cycles. The Graduate Director and Graduate Committee are working on developing additional materials to aid students in preparing for the comprehensive exam.

The Graduate Director and Graduate Committee have created a rubric for thesis. The rubric will be implemented during the 2016-2017 academic year as the first round of students complete the thesis track. At the conclusion of the academic year, the rubric will be evaluated and accordingly revised.

Plan for Continuous Improvement: MA

Closing Summary:

The Graduate Director and Graduate Committee will implement the rubric for the thesis track for the first time. Following the 2016-2017 academic year, the rubric will be evaluated and modified as necessary.

The Graduate Director and Graduate Committee implemented an exit survey during the 2015-2016 academic year. At the completion of the 2016-2017 academic year, data from the exit survey will be analyzed. This data will be used to aid the design of the program.

As the Master Program is scheduled for its comprehensive program performance review to take place during the 2016-2017 academic year, the findings of this review will be used to improve the program beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year.