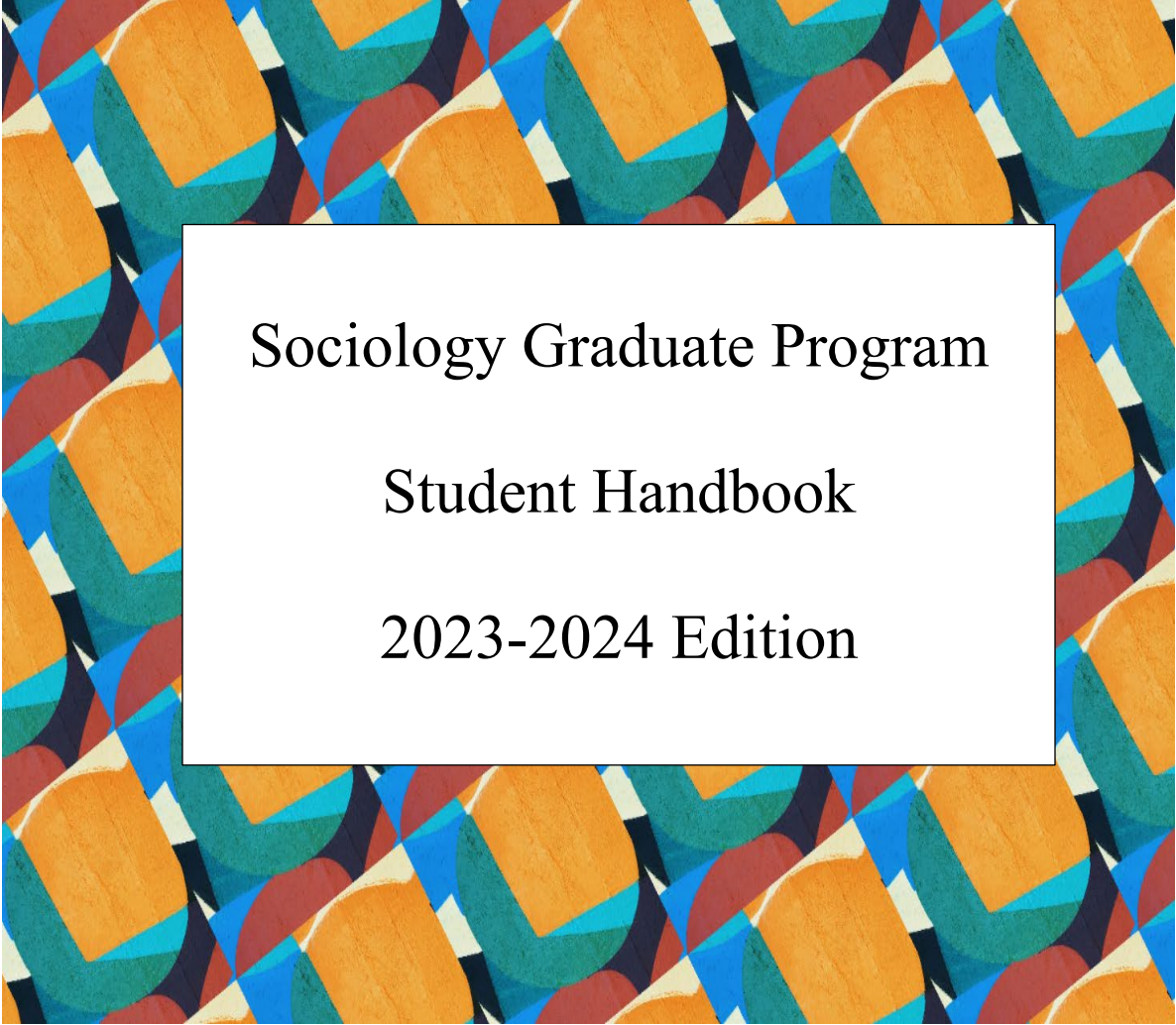


Department of Sociology and Anthropology
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
George Mason University

The background of the central text box is a vibrant, abstract pattern composed of overlapping, rounded geometric shapes in shades of orange, teal, red, and blue, set against a dark background. The pattern has a textured, almost wood-grain-like appearance within the colored areas.

Sociology Graduate Program

Student Handbook

2023-2024 Edition

A digital and always up-to-date version of this handbook can be found in the 'Current Graduate Students' tab on the website (soan.gmu.edu/graduate/resources)

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to George Mason University's Sociology Program. The faculty looks forward to a rewarding professional association with you during this important portion of your career.

The George Mason Sociology Program focuses on linking public sociology and applied research. Public and applied sociology represents a rapidly growing emphasis within the discipline of sociology. It calls for sociologists to bring the distinct skills of the discipline to bear on matters of great public concern within academic, policy, and applied research settings. The intent is to strengthen the field's ability to address pressing social concerns, communicate its perspective and findings to audiences beyond its disciplinary boundaries, and foster the creation and performance of new public social formations.

We bring together dual missions in our practice of public and applied sociology. The first, articulated by Burawoy, is to strengthen the institutions of civil society against the encroachments of both state and market (Burawoy 2005). The second is committed to the tenets of equality and social justice, with an emphasis on "historically oppressed and exploited publics: women, people of color, the poor, sexual minorities, and other socially oppressed groups" (Feagin et al 2009:72). Social justice is to public sociology as health is to medicine: it serves as a primary, orienting objective.

Using sociological knowledge to strengthen institutions of civil society is a primary means to promote social justice. With this dual aim in mind, we emphasize high-quality sociological work that serves oppressed and marginalized publics, creates new publics, promotes public discussion, and informs public policy.

In our public and applied Sociology Program we teach and support students in:

- designing research and programs to address **diverse questions** raised by scholars, partners, and/or clients;
- using a **broad range of methods and techniques** including comparative, qualitative, quantitative, and engaged research methodologies, as well as techniques for outreach and engagement and skills for applied research settings; and,
- producing a **variety of outcomes**, including publication in academic and popular journals and media, public events and other interventions, and program development and implementation.

Our faculty's research agendas and curricula emphasize public and applied sociology as the creating and evaluating of fields and networks of individual well-being, community empowerment, creative social agency, transnational collaboration, and democratic and sustainable institutional

innovation. Sociology faculty at Mason rely on what we learn from our engaged research to ensure that we perform highly relevant and reliable work. For us, practice and theory are bound together.

Upon completing our program, our students have the theoretical, analytical, and professional skills and connections that allow them to transition into teaching, research, and diverse public and applied settings.

Guiding Principles

In practice, therefore, we propose that the mission of public sociology entails the following commitments from the sociology program faculty and students in their practice of public sociology:

In our department...

- We value creative public engagement and a social justice orientation in addition to the typical metrics of intellectual promise, in applications to the Ph.D. and MA programs as well as student work.
- We further the advancement of public sociology in graduate teaching, mentoring, and professional development.
- We strive to develop and expand expertise on how to do publicly engaged work that adheres to the highest scientific and professional standards.
- We promote careers built on this work by supporting faculty, students, and alumni doing public-facing projects.
- We encourage and cultivate innovative student research projects and diverse job placements, training thought leaders both inside the academy and out.

In our profession...

- We work to improve the value placed on public and community engaged scholarship within the professional discipline of sociology.
- We provide a space in which alternate visions of public sociology may be explored and implemented, even if these do not subscribe to professional sociology's claims about what public sociology is and should be.
- We critically interrogate social problems and engage publics in a manner that transcends the academy.
- We take responsibility for moving beyond an audience of professional sociologists to a broader set of publics.
- We work to bring sociology's unique understanding of the individual and the social to serve the public good.

In our relations...

- We embrace the core practices of democracy in our intradepartmental relations: dialogue, transparency, mutual adjustment, symmetrical relations, and shared governance.
- We make decisions regarding departmental and program partnerships, whether curricular or financial, in consultation with the tenets of public sociology outlined in this report (i.e., a mission to strengthen civil society and the pursuit of social justice). In keeping with existing departmental practice, such affiliations are matters of collective conversation and democratic approval prior to their implementation or finalization.
- We are informed by and accountable to the publics we work with.
- We are attentive to power relations and privileges (including those accompanying a graduate education and/or a researcher role) in all of our dealings with publics.
- We do everything in our power not to reinscribe unjust power relations or contribute to the oppression of marginalized groups in our work.

In our public impact...

- We incorporate public concerns into the development and execution of projects.
- We produce high-quality work that benefits publics and public institutions.
- We push for ever more active, deliberative, and committed publics.
- We seek to build up and strengthen the institutions and organizations accountable to publics.
- We use our sociological knowledge and skills to influence these institutions (including our own university) to better serve the publics to which they are accountable.

The following is a summary of the sociology graduate program's rules, regulations and policies. The program also maintains a website that includes important information about the program as well as an email listserv to disperse information to students concerning colloquia and other university events, as well as research, publication, and funding opportunities. This listserv will be the main means through which the department and graduate director communicate with students.

Helpful Acronyms to Know

Sociology Program / GMU

SOAN=	Sociology & Anthropology
CHSS =	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CSSR =	Center for Social Science Research
SOCI =	Abbreviation for Sociology Courses
IIR =	Institute for Immigration Research
PSA =	Public Sociology Association

GSSA = Graduate Student Sociology Association
GTA = Graduate Teaching Assistant
GRA= Graduate Research Assistant
GAPSA= Graduate and Professional Student Association
JC = Johnson Center
UDTS= University Dissertation & Thesis Services

Discipline

ASA= American Sociological Association
DCSS = DC Sociological Society
SSS = Southern Sociological Society
SSSP = Society for the Study of Social Problems
NSF = National Science Foundation
SSRC = Social Science Research Council
IRB = Institutional Review Board

Department Contacts

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Center for Social Science Research

The Sociology and Anthropology Department (SOAN) is also home to the [Center for Social Science Research \(CSSR\)](https://cssr.gmu.edu/), offering professional support to graduate students and faculty, training and technical assistance, and promoting community based, participatory and other forms of research through its four hubs: education and health; movement engaged; urban research; and the Global South. The CSSR builds on a long tradition of social science research for the public good which is clearly exemplified in its current Democratizing Nova and Next System Studies initiatives.

Graduate students are active participants at the CSSR, serving as Research Assistants at the Center and for many of its research project, as well as being actively engaged in the research hubs. Incoming students are encouraged to join the research hubs and participate in CSSR events as their schedule and other commitments allow.

More information about the CSSR, the research hubs, and the current research initiatives can be found at: <https://cssr.gmu.edu/>.

Student Advising and Mentoring

Graduate Director and MA Director

The Graduate Director and Director of MA Programs serve a number of functions for students. In conjunction with the student, they help the student determine the schedule of classes for each semester, answers general questions about the program, and help guide the student in terms of their concentrations and research interests.

The Directors are the first point of contact for any departmental or administrative problems that may arise, and should be consulted before any program changes are made. In addition, the Directors evaluate student's progress in the program.

First-Year Mentor

All entering students are assigned a first-year faculty mentor based on noted student interests and faculty availability. First-year mentors will initially meet with students periodically and then on an as-needed basis, and serve as an initial faculty contact for incoming students. First-year mentors engage with students about their research interests, help students learn about the department and faculty interests, and provide support to students as they get acclimated to the program.

Dissertation / Thesis Chair or Capstone Advisor

The dissertation committee chair, thesis committee chair, or capstone advisor are selected by the student when the student is preparing to complete their final research project. They are primarily responsible for supervising all aspects of student's final projects, including framing and scope of the project during the planning and proposal phase. Additional information about these advising roles can be found below.

SOCIOLOGY MASTERS PROGRAM

Degree Requirements: Masters

To receive a Master's degree in Sociology from George Mason University students must:

- Complete all required coursework, including foundational and elective courses (27 – 30 credits).
 - Only graduate courses may apply toward the Master's degree and more than half of the required minimum credits applied to the degree must be earned at Mason.
 - Up to six credits from other schools and departments may be counted toward the M.A. degree. Courses taken outside of the department must receive prior approval of the MA Director in order to count toward the MA degree.
- Write and receive final Committee or Advisor approval for a Master's Thesis or Capstone Paper (3-6 credits).

The course requirements for the Sociology MA are:

- One course in public sociology ([SOCI 601](#) Proseminar in Public and Applied Sociology)
- Two courses in Social Theory ([SOCI 711](#) Classical Sociological Theory and [SOCI 712](#) Contemporary Sociological Theory)
- One methodology and analysis course ([SOCI 620](#) Methods and Logic of Social Inquiry)
- Two additional methodology electives (select from the following):
 - [SOCI 631](#) Survey Research
 - [SOCI 632](#) Evaluation Research for Social Programs
 - [SOCI 633](#) Special Topics in Sociology (when topic is Critical Theory, Critical Ethnography, or another course with written approval of the graduate director.)
 - [SOCI 634](#) Qualitative Research Methods
 - [SOCI 636](#) Statistical Reasoning
 - [SOCI 638](#) Feminist Theory
 - [SOCI 655](#) Ethnography
 - [SOCI 660](#) Historical and Comparative Sociology
 - [SOCI 730](#) Analytic Techniques of Social Research

- [ANTH 650](#) Methods in Anthropology
- [WMST 610](#) Feminist Approaches to Social Research
- [WMST 611](#) Feminist Research Practice Total Credits
- Three or four elective courses (full course listing can be found here: <https://soan.gmu.edu/courses>)
 - Students can also take 1-6 credits of [SOCI 616 Practicum in Sociology](#) where they complete an internship for elective credits.

Master's Capstone or Thesis

As a final degree requirement for the MA in sociology, each student completes an independent project which can be either a capstone paper or master's thesis. It is recommended that students determine which option they would like to do by the end of their first year. Students should review the content below, as well as talk with faculty members and the MA Director, to determine which final project is most suitable for them.

Master's Thesis

A master's thesis is an original body of empirical research or theoretical analysis. If a student selects to complete a master's thesis, they must select a thesis committee and write a thesis proposal. Guidelines for the master's thesis are laid out by the university and require:

- a committee of 3 faculty who are members of the graduate faculty.
- completion of 3-6 credits of SOCI 799: Master's Thesis.
- a thesis proposal.
- formatting approval by University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS) generally three weeks prior to the end of the semester.
- final submission to UTDS approximately two weeks prior to the end of the semester.

Students should choose a thesis topic that is of interest to them. Before making a final decision on a thesis topic, students should consult with faculty members. Once the student has selected a thesis topic, they can form a thesis committee and begin writing a thesis proposal. Additional information about this process is outlined below.

The master's thesis is a major independent scholarly project. It is widely recognized as the standard product of an MA program and is similar to a dissertation in form and process. It is especially well-suited to those who wish to do professional-level research or pursue doctoral degrees. A final benefit of the thesis option, is that it provides students the flexibility of having more than one semester to complete the work.

Thesis Committee

When students are ready to begin their thesis work, they should select their thesis committee. The thesis committee provides guidance and oversight of the student's thesis research and writing.

The committee consists of a Chair (who must be a full-time professor in the Sociology Program), and at least two additional members. One of these additional committee members must be in the Sociology Program, a second may be from a Department at GMU that is outside the Sociology Program. A third optional committee member may be from outside the University in any program, but must hold a terminal degree within their discipline.

The Chair is primarily responsible for supervising all aspects of the thesis and reads the various drafts of the thesis, guiding the student in the direction that the thesis should take and directing the student in the various changes that are necessary.

The student is responsible for selecting the committee, though they may seek guidance from the MA Director, and for keeping all committee members informed of the scope, plan, and progress of the research as well as the writing of the thesis.

Thesis Proposal

Before beginning data collection or theoretical analysis, a thesis proposal should be written. The proposal should include a statement of the problem, a review of the literature and theoretical framing, a description of the data to be collected (if applicable), and the methodology to be used. The thesis proposal is generally between 5-15 pages, though can be longer, and can be written before or after a student registers for thesis credits (SOCI 799). The timeline for completing the proposal should be agreed upon by the student and their thesis committee.

Additional information on writing research proposals can be found here: <https://soan.gmu.edu/resource-soan/researchproposal>

Thesis Registration (SOCI 799)

Once students have selected a thesis topic and formed a committee, they can register for thesis credits (SOCI 799). To do so, they must complete and submit the Thesis Committee Form and the Thesis Enrollment Form (both found here: <https://soan.gmu.edu/graduate/ma-sociology/forms>). The Thesis Committee form includes a 2-3-page prospectus outlining the research problem or question students plan to investigate. Note, this is not the formal thesis proposal, which can be completed after registering for SOCI 799.

Students must take a minimum of three credit hours in their first semester of SOCI 799. After that semester, students must continuously enroll in at least one credit of SOCI 799 per semester,

exclusive of summers, until the thesis is complete and has been successfully submitted to the library. Students who are completing their thesis in the summer must be registered for at least 1 credit of SOCI 799 in the summer.

A maximum of 6 credits of master's thesis research (SOCI 799) may be applied to the degree. Students registered in SOCI 799 are graded IP (in progress) until work is complete; at that time, they are graded S/NC (satisfactory or no credit).

Thesis Work

A master's thesis demonstrates the student's capacity to carry out independent research. The thesis consists of substantial sociological research or theoretical analysis that will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in sociology. Thesis papers generally range from between 60-150 pages. Specific guidelines, especially for, but not limited to thesis formatting may be found at: <http://library.gmu.edu/udts>.

Students should work collaboratively with their committee to setup a schedule for meetings and communication preferences and expectations. As well as a planned timeline for drafts and completion. Traditionally, students consult with the Chair frequently and provide occasional brief progress reports to committee members. Although students may consult with committee members who have special expertise during the analysis phase, normally, the analysis, interpretation, and write-up are done by the student in close consultation with the Chair. The thesis is usually submitted to the full committee only when the student and chair believe the thesis is nearly in final form. This draft should be shown to the thesis committee at least three weeks before the final thesis is due to the University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS) office.

The committee is not bound to accept the draft presented. The committee can require additional changes in writing to clarify the document, etc., or can require a reorganization of major portions of the thesis. Keep this in mind when planning your graduation timeline as Master's theses generally require multiple drafts for full committee approval. When the committee requires revision of the thesis, the student should work closely with the Chair to address all of the issues before presenting another draft to the committee.

Thesis Defense

Masters' students are not required to formally defend their thesis, though they can make the request of their committee to hold a formal defense. Whether the Chair and committee members agree to hosting a defense depends on timing and availability. Students interested in pursuing doctoral degrees may opt to do this for the experience.

Thesis Submission

Once the thesis chair and committee have approved the thesis, each student will collect approval signatures from the committee chair and committee on the appropriate [College of Humanities and Social Sciences Signature Sheet](#) and forward the signature sheet to the MA Director. The MA Director will coordinate the Department Chair signature and submit to the Dean's office for sign-off. Once signed by the Dean, the Dean's office will forward the finalized signature sheet to the library on the student's behalf.

On or before the thesis submission deadline for any semester, each student will submit a complete electronic copy of their thesis, a transmittal sheet and embargo form to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS) as outlined in their [submission guidelines](#).

For degree conferral in a particular semester, the thesis format must be approved by UDTS generally 2-3 weeks prior to the end of the semester, and the above materials must be submitted to the library by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the last day of class in that semester. For more information about the thesis submission process and each semester deadlines, visit: <https://library.gmu.edu/udts>.

Master's Capstone Paper

As an alternative to the thesis, students can elect to complete an independent research or project-based paper. Unlike the thesis, the master's capstone paper must be completed in one semester under the guidance of one faculty advisor, and does not adhere to the university formatting guidelines. Guidelines for the capstone paper are set within the department and require:

- one sociology faculty advisor who is a member of the graduate faculty.
- completion of 3 credits of SOCI 797: Master's Capstone Paper.
- one capstone paper to be submitted at the end of the semester to the capstone advisor and MA Director.

Capstone papers can be any of the following formats:

- i. *Scholarly research paper*: This is written in the style of a journal article, with a particular journal in mind (using original secondary or primary data analysis).
- ii. *Review paper*: This is a scholarly review and critical analysis of the state of the art in a subfield of sociology research (similar to an *Annual Review of Sociology* article).
- iii. *Applied problem paper*: This is a written assessment of a problem or a question that an agency is facing. Students identify an organization to work with, identify questions of interest to the organization, and conduct research to provide recommendations.

- iv. *Applied project*: This includes a paper outlining the research problem, literature review, research design, empirical research and data analysis that inform the problem, along with a project deliverable (e.g., project evaluation, policy brief, training materials, informational brochure, grant proposal, documentary script and/or story board, podcast script, etc.)

While the length of capstone papers varies depending on the format, they are generally 35-pages or less.

Students should choose the topic and format for their capstone paper based on their interests and career goals. Before making a final decision on a topic and format, students should consult with faculty members. Once the student has selected a topic and format, they can select a capstone advisor and register for capstone credits (SOCI 797). Alternately, students can select a capstone advisor first, then work collaboratively with the advisor to determine a suitable topic and project format. Additional information about this process is outlined below.

The benefits of completing a capstone paper include that it requires only 3 credits and can be done in one semester. Unlike the thesis, it does not require university standardized formatting, and can be submitted at the last day of the semester. Also, students can choose from multiple paper formats including applied format, that may be especially useful for students seeking to work outside of academia or professional-research settings. See additional information about Capstone Papers below.

Capstone Advisor

Before students begin their capstone paper, they should select their capstone advisor. The capstone advisor provides guidance and oversight of the student's research and writing. The capstone advisor may also provide guidance on the capstone format most suitable for the student's topic and career goals.

The advisor must be a faculty member of the sociology program who is also a member of the graduate faculty. The advisor is responsible for supervising all aspects of the capstone paper, guiding the student in the direction that the project should take, and directing the student in the various changes that are necessary.

The student is responsible for selecting their capstone advisor, though they may seek guidance from the MA Director. Students are also responsible for keeping the capstone advisor informed of the scope, plan, and progress of the capstone paper.

Capstone Timing and Registration (SOCI 797)

There is no specified semester in which the Capstone must be completed, though most MA students chose to complete it during their final semester.

Once students have selected a capstone topic, format, and advisor they can register for capstone credits (SOCI 797). To do so, they must complete and submit the Capstone Enrollment and Advisor Form (found here: <https://soan.gmu.edu/graduate/ma-sociology/forms>) to the MA director. The form must be submitted with a 2-3-page prospectus outlining the research problem or question students plan to investigate, and the type of paper they plan to complete.

A maximum of 3 capstone (SOCI 797) credits may be applied to the degree and these should be taken all in one semester. Students are expected to complete their Capstone papers while registered in SOCI 797. Capstone credits are graded S/NC (satisfactory or no credit).

Capstone Submission

Capstone papers are due by the end of the semester they are completed; capstone advisors and students can set the specific due date. Final Capstone papers must be approved by the capstone advisor. Once approved, each student will submit a complete electronic copy of their capstone paper to the MA Director and Department Secretary, to be posted on the internal department capstone repository.

Other MA Considerations

Sociology, MA and Interdisciplinary Studies, MAIS (concentration in women and gender studies) Dual Degree

The Sociology Program and the Interdisciplinary Studies Programs offer a dual master's program where a student can earn both a Sociology MA and the Interdisciplinary Studies MAIS (concentration in women and gender studies) in 57 credits rather than 69 credits.

More information on the [SOCI and MAIS/ WGST dual degree can be found here.](#)

Individualized Dual Master's Degree Programs

George Mason students have the option to pursue two master's degrees simultaneously. After completing one semester in their initial master's program, interested students must apply and be accepted to the second master's program within one year of matriculation in the initial program. The application must include a written statement explaining the intellectual or pedagogical purpose behind the degree program, and the academic symmetries that exist between the underlying fields of study. A restricted number of credits may be shared across dual degree programs.

See [AP.6.9.6 Individualized Dual Master's Degree Programs](#) for more information.

SOCIOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Degree Requirements: Doctor of Philosophy

To receive a Doctoral degree in Sociology from George Mason University students must:

- Complete all required coursework, including foundational course and courses in student selected concentration (60 credits).
 - Only graduate courses may apply toward the Master's degree and more than half of the required minimum credits applied to the degree must be earned at Mason.
 - Up to six credits from other schools and departments may be counted toward the PhD degree. Courses taken outside of the department must receive prior approval of the Graduate Director in order to count toward the doctoral degree.
- Take and pass a written comprehensive exam.
- Write a dissertation proposal and pass a dissertation proposal defense (3-9 credits).
- Write a dissertation (3-9 credits)
- Pass a dissertation defense.

Course Requirements

The course requirements for the Sociology PhD are:

- One course in public sociology ([SOCI 601](#) Proseminar in Public and Applied Sociology)
- Two courses in Social Theory ([SOCI 711](#) Classical Sociological Theory and [SOCI 712](#) Contemporary Sociological Theory)
- Two methodology and analysis courses ([SOCI 620](#) Methods and Logic of Social Inquiry and [SOCI 636](#) Statistical Reasoning)
- Three additional methodology electives (select three from the following):
 - [SOCI 631](#) Survey Research
 - [SOCI 632](#) Evaluation Research for Social Programs
 - [SOCI 633](#) Special Topics in Sociology (when topic is Critical Theory, Critical Ethnography, or another course with written approval of the graduate director.)
 - [SOCI 634](#) Qualitative Research Methods
 - [SOCI 638](#) Feminist Theory
 - [SOCI 655](#) Ethnography
 - [SOCI 860](#) Historical and Comparative Sociology
 - [SOCI 730](#) Analytic Techniques of Social Research
 - [ANTH 650](#) Methods in Anthropology
 - [WMST 610](#) Feminist Approaches to Social Research
 - [WMST 611](#) Feminist Research Practice Total Credits

- Two proseminar courses ([SOCI 803](#) Institutions and Inequalities and [SOCI 804](#) Sociology of Globalization)
- Three courses within concentrations (course list can be found here: <https://soan.gmu.edu/programs/la-phd-soci/requirements>)
- Seven elective courses (Full course listing can be found here: <https://soan.gmu.edu/courses>)
 - Students can also take 1-6 credits of [SOCI 616 Practicum in Sociology](#) where they complete an internship for elective credits.

Students can take courses that are not in the list, with the prior approval of the Graduate Director.

Program of Study

All doctoral students must submit a program of study for approval by the Dean. A Program of Study is a listing of all courses that student have taken or plan to take to complete the requirements for the doctoral degree.

Usually before the end of the second year of graduate study but no later than consideration for advancement to candidacy, doctoral students must meet with the Graduate Director to finalize their Program of Study.

You can find the Program of Study form on the PhD forms page of the Department website: <https://soan.gmu.edu/graduate/phd-sociology/forms>.

Comprehensive Examinations

After completing the required coursework, students take the PhD Comprehensive Exam. The comprehensive exam tests students' mastery of the foundations of sociological inquiry, linking research methods and sociological theory to public concerns, as well as material in the student's area of concentration. It is expected that, by the time a student receives their comprehensive exam questions, the student has a high level of expertise in their chosen area of concentration alongside public sociology. It is also expected that the student has acquired the synthesis and writing skills necessary to display that knowledge clearly and concisely in a time constrained environment.

Exam Format and Timing

Each concentration has a committee of three faculty who prepare the Comprehensive Exam using the sample questions available on the program website (<https://soan.gmu.edu/graduate/phd-sociology/comprehensive-exam>) as a guide. All examinees are required to answer the first question, and select one question from each of the remaining two sections, for a total of three questions. Exams must be a minimum of 6,000 words but should not exceed 8,000 words for all

three questions combined. Overall, the exams will be evaluated on evidence of the ability to think, reason, and write from a sociological perspective. Strong answers to each of the exam questions will provide in-depth discussion of each component of the questions and refer to a broad range of different sources (theoretical, empirical, etc.) in the relevant literature. Strong answers will also be well organized and well written; it should go without saying that they will explicitly answer the questions and demonstrate knowledge of the relevant debates. Each answer requires a minimum of eight sources, appropriately referenced and used within the essay. In preparing the answers, students may use any notes and reference materials in accordance with the University's Honor Code (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>). The exam is taken as an open-book, open-note written exam over a three-day period, beginning at 9 am on Day 1 and ending on Day 3 at 10 pm. The exam is distributed to students via email by the Graduate Director and is submitted via email as well. The exam is offered every January and August in the week prior to the start of the semester.

Comprehensive exams outside the normal cycle will only be considered if the following two conditions are both met: 1) an off-schedule exam is necessary to prevent the student from exceeding the time limit for advancement to candidacy; and 2) extenuating circumstances prevent the student from completing the exam on-schedule, in January or August in the week prior to the start of the semester.

Exam Evaluation

Each concentration committee, composed of three Sociology faculty members, completes the review of the exams within one-month of completion. Students receive a written evaluation of their exam from the committee which will at minimum inform them of whether they pass or fail the exam. Students, regardless of passing status, meet with the committee to debrief the exam responses.

Students who fail the exam may repeat the exam as many times as necessary to pass. However, students must successfully pass the exam before advancing to candidacy. Time limits apply to advancement; students are responsible for knowing the date by which they must advance.

Academic Integrity

Students may use any materials available to them to complete the exam. However, students are expected to complete the exam independently and to reference and cite all materials used to craft the response. Students who plagiarize or otherwise cheat on the comprehensive exam may be terminated from the graduate program.

Doctoral Dissertation Process

Dissertation Committee

After successfully passing the PhD comprehensive exam, students select their dissertation committee. The dissertation committee provides guidance and oversight of the student's dissertation research and writing. This committee is responsible for approving the doctoral dissertation proposal, supervising all aspects of the dissertation such as research design, data gathering, interpretation, and analysis, and the writing of the dissertation. This committee reads the various drafts of the dissertation guiding the student in the direction that the dissertation should take and directing the student in the various changes that are necessary.

The committee consists of a Chair (who must be a full-time professor in the Sociology Program), and at least two additional members. One of these additional committee members must be in the Sociology Program, a second may be from a Department at GMU that is outside the Sociology Program. A third optional committee member may be from outside the University in any program but must hold a terminal degree within their discipline. Faculty from the Anthropology program may act as Co-Chair of the dissertation committee.

It is the student's responsibility to select the committee, though they may seek guidance from the Graduate Director.

Dissertation Proposal

After passing the comprehensive exam, students can register for SOCI 998 (Dissertation Proposal) with their Dissertation Committee chair and begin writing their dissertation proposal. The dissertation proposal is an outline of the proposed dissertation research. The proposal constitutes of, i) Identification of the research problem and its significance, ii) A review of literature on the research problem, iii) A discussion of the theoretical framework and research methods, iv) the plan for gathering and analyzing evidence, v) and a timeline for completing the research. If applicable, students should complete an approval request for research with human subjects. <https://oria.gmu.edu/topics/human-subjects/>.

Proposal Defense

The dissertation proposal is distributed to the dissertation committee. All students must defend a dissertation proposal in front of their committee, before they advance to candidacy. Details of this process should be coordinated with the Dissertation Committee Chair and Graduate Director.

Dissertation Registration (998, 999)

Students complete a minimum of 3 credits of SOCI 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal and 3 credits of SOCI 999 Doctoral Dissertation. They may apply a maximum of 12 dissertation credits (SOCI 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal and SOCI 999 Doctoral Dissertation combined) to their degree.

When students are ready to register for SOCI 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal, they should contact the Graduate Director. When students are ready to register for SOCI 999 Doctoral Dissertation, they must coordinate that through the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. A detailed overview of the registration procedures can be found here: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/grad999request>

Because of Mason's continuous registration policy, students are required to register for additional credits of SOCI 999 Doctoral Dissertation until they have completed their dissertation. Because students cannot register for credits of SOCI 999 Doctoral Dissertation until they have advanced to PhD candidacy, they may choose (but are not required) to register for additional credits of SOCI 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal.

Advancement to Candidacy

To advance to candidacy, students must complete all coursework required on their approved program of study, successfully pass the written comprehensive exam, and successfully defend their dissertation proposal. Once these items have been completed, the student works collaboratively with the Graduate Director to complete and submit the Advancement to Candidacy Form to the Dean's office. Students MUST advance to PhD candidacy within six (6) years of the date that they enter the PhD program.

Students cannot register for SOCI 999 Dissertation Research until their submitted Advancement to Candidacy Form has been approved. Students advanced to candidacy after the add period for a given semester must wait until the following semester to register for 999 Dissertation Research.

Dissertation

The dissertation committee guides the student in the preparation of the dissertation. Specific guidelines, especially for, but not limited to dissertation formatting may be found at: <http://library.gmu.edu/udts>.

Students should work collaboratively with their committee to setup a schedule for meetings and communication preferences and expectations. As well as a planned timeline for drafts and completion. Traditionally, students consult with the Chair frequently and provide occasional brief

progress reports to committee members. Full committee consultation is usually necessary only when substantial changes must be made to the approved proposal.

Although students may consult with committee members who have special expertise during the analysis phase, normally, the analysis, interpretation, and write-up are done by the student in close consultation with the Chair. The dissertation should be submitted to the full committee only when the student and chair believe the dissertation is nearly in final form.

Once the Chair and all committee members have approved the dissertation, students can begin to schedule their defense.

Dissertation Defense and Final Approval

As soon as all degree requirements have been satisfied, including completion and approval of the doctoral dissertation, the student may request to schedule a dissertation defense. Approval to hold a defense is given by the dissertation committee, coordinating with the Graduate Director.

The dissertation defense should be scheduled through the Department Secretary, who will assist with reserving a room for the defense. The Department Secretary must inform the Graduate Dean of the defense at least three weeks before the projected defense date and circulate notice of a defense to the university community two weeks before the defense date.

Do not ask your Dissertation Committee Chair to schedule your dissertation defense until your committee has seen and approved your last draft. It is very common for several drafts of the dissertation to be required prior to scheduling your defense and, if all goes well, at least one revision after the defense. The dissertation represents the culmination of your program and an important contribution to the body of sociological knowledge. It is the faculty's responsibility to the field and to you that the final product meets a high standard.

At the close of the dissertation defense, the dissertation committee makes final judgments for approving the dissertation. The doctoral candidate is responsible for making all required changes promptly, submitting the original and required copies, and obtaining signatures. Final approval for the dissertation is given by the doctoral dissertation committee and Graduate Director.

Dissertation Submission

On or before the dissertation submission deadline for any semester, each student will submit a complete electronic copy of their dissertation (signed Signature Sheet through Curriculum Vitae) to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS). At the time of final submission, the student will also turn in completed versions of the Transmittal Sheet, ETD Submission Form, and Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS) agreement.

For degree conferral in a particular semester, the above materials must be submitted to the library by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the last day of class in that semester. (For specific deadlines and more information, please reference the UDTS website at: <https://library.gmu.edu/udts>.)

Timetable for Completing PhD Requirements

Typically, full-time students take the required coursework during their first, second and third years in the program, and complete the Comprehensive Exam at the end of the third year and defend their dissertation research proposal in their fourth year. The dissertation research is completed in the next two to three years, at the end of which they defend their dissertations and earn a PhD. According to university regulations, students have until six years to defend their dissertation proposal and until nine years to defend their dissertation. Extension requests for an additional year can be made to the registrar's office <https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit/> due to extenuating circumstances at the proposal defense stage or the dissertation research stage, but the total years to complete the PhD would still remain ten.

GTA/ GRA Assignment Guidelines

Students with Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) are expected to support faculty research. Full-time GRAs are expected to work 20 hours per week and can receive up to 12 credits of tuition waiver; half time GRAs, working 10 hours a week, receive up to 6 credits.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) support the department by engaging in activities related to teaching. These can include: teaching sections of courses/labs, supporting instructors teaching large sections, tutoring, advising, and curriculum development.

Annual Review of Doctoral Students

Each year doctoral students are required to submit a review form in which they outline their progress and submit it to the Graduate Director. This is an opportunity for the Graduate Director to know where the students are in the program, as well as celebrate their accomplishments.

To see the full Annual Review of Doctoral Students, click here:

https://d101vc9winf8ln.cloudfront.net/documents/34115/original/Annual_Review_of_Doctoral_Students.docx?1582646100

PROGRAM POLICIES

Time Limit

Master's degree students have six (6) years from the time of first enrollment as a degree-seeking student in the program to complete their degrees. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and

Services for information. Students who are given permission to re-enroll following an absence from Mason may not count the six-year time limit as beginning on the date of re-enrollment.

For both full-time and part-time students enrolled in doctoral programs, whether entry is post-baccalaureate or post-master's, the total time to degree will not exceed nine (9) calendar years from the time of first enrollment in the program as a doctoral student. Doctoral students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree and to advance to candidacy within no more than six (6) years.

Students who will not meet published time limits because of compelling circumstances beyond their control may request an exception to this policy by petitioning their dean for a single extension of one calendar year prior to the expiration of their time limit (for details on how to do this visit: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/gradtimeextensionreq>). If any extension is granted, the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed seven (7) years for MA students and 10 years for doctoral students. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an exception to this policy shall be considered a failure to make satisfactory academic progress and result in termination from the program as per University policy.

Full-time/ Part-time status

Graduate students are considered full-time if they are enrolled in at least 9 graduate credits per semester or hold a full-time assistantship (total 20 hours a week) and are enrolled in at least 6 graduate credits per semester. Graduate students are considered half-time if they are enrolled in at least 4.5 graduate credits per semester.

Master's students who are enrolled in thesis credits are considered full-time if they are enrolled in at least three credits of 799 per semester. Master's students may enroll in 1 credit of 799 and be considered in status (either full-time or half-time) only if they have completed 3 credits of 799 and the student along with the MA Director and department chair certify each semester that the student is working full-time or half-time on the thesis (use this form: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/MTR.pdf>).

Students enrolled in one credit of SOCI 999 (Dissertation Research) may be considered full-time or half-time status if they have completed at least 12 credits of SOCI 998 and SOCI 999 combined, and the Graduate Director certifies the student is working full-time or half-time on their dissertation (use this form: https://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/HTE_FTE-DDR-Form-201970-revision_fillable.pdf)

Reduction of credit

If students enter the PhD programs with prior graduate degrees, they are eligible for a reduction in the required credits to degree. Reduction of credits requires the approval of the Graduate Director and the dean of CHSS. For the doctoral program, the maximum reduction is 30 credits. Students requesting a reduction of credits must supply official transcripts.

Coursework applied to a reduction must have received a minimum grade of B. Reduction of credits requests from students who are admitted provisionally are not considered until the students have fulfilled the conditions of their admission and had the provisional qualifier removed from their records.

Academic Warning and Termination

A notation of academic warning is entered on the transcript of a graduate student who receives a grade of C or F in a graduate course or while a grade of IN is in effect. An unsatisfactory grade will also result in the termination of Graduate Teaching/Research Assistantships.

Masters and doctoral students in the sociology program will be terminated for the reasons listed below unless an academic policy exception is obtained:

1. Accumulate grades of F in two graduate courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades in graduate courses.
2. Receives a plagiarism finding by the Office of Academic Integrity.

Academic Integrity and Professional Ethics

The Mason Honor Code reads as follow:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

For additional information on academic integrity visit, <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>. The sociology program does not tolerate plagiarism and a plagiarism finding by the Office of Academic Integrity will result in program termination.

Both faculty and students are also expected to abide by the ethical code set forth by the American Sociological Association (for more information visit: <https://www.asanet.org/about/governance-and-leadership/code-ethics>).

Policy on Discrimination

The university does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of age, race/ethnicity, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or religious beliefs. If you believe you have been subject to such discrimination, you should contact the Chair of the Department or the university's affirmative action/equal employment officer as soon as possible. Please see the University's full policy on non-discrimination, <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/non-discrimination-policy/>.

Policy on Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment by either faculty or students will not be tolerated by the sociology program or the university. If you believe you have been subject to sexual harassment, you should contact the Graduate Director, the Chair of the Department or Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (<https://diversity.gmu.edu/about-dei>) as soon as possible. Please see the University's full policy on sexual harassment here: <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>.

Students with Disabilities

If you have any special learning needs, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>) so that you can receive the proper assistance. ODS staff will determine what documentation is needed for various academic accommodations, and if needed, support or guide the process of acquiring needed documentation. Sometimes this process can take time, so please reach out as early as possible.

Course Grading and GPA

In order to graduate, students must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in coursework, which may include no more than 6 credits of C. (Grades of C+, C-, or D do not apply to graduate courses. The GPA calculation excludes all transfer courses and Mason non-degree studies credits not formally approved for the degree.)

Incomplete (IN)

If a student is unable to complete all course requirements due to circumstances beyond the student's control, they may request faculty allow them an incomplete (graded as IN) for the course. The

"incomplete" grade requires an agreement between the student and the professor regarding the work to be completed and the time within which the work is to be completed.

The student must complete all requirements by the end of the ninth week of the following semester, and the instructor must submit a change of grade by the end of the tenth week of the following semester. If the student fails to do so, the grade of IN is changed by the Registrar to an 'F.'

If a student is still unable to complete all course requirements due to circumstances beyond the student's control, they may request an incomplete extension. For more information on how to do this, visit: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/gradincompleteextension>.

Withdrawal (W)

Students who wish to withdraw from one or more courses must submit an official withdrawal form. Students are advised to utilize the withdrawal option within the drop period authorized by the Graduate School, but if there are nonacademic reasons for withdrawing from classes after the drop period, students may do so without academic penalty. For more information on the withdrawal process visit: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/gradwithdrawal>.

Leave of Absence / Parental Leave of Absence

Graduate students needing to take one or two semesters off from course work can do so without penalty, though degree time limits are not changed. Students who have two or more consecutive semesters of non-enrollment must request reenrollment when they return (See details here: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/gradreenrollment>).

Graduate students actively enrolled for at least one academic year, who intend to become parents via birth, adoption, foster or custodial care placement shall have the option, after notice to the Associate Provost for Graduate Education (APGE), of taking a Parental Leave of Absence (PLoA) of one semester. The PLoA period does not count toward the student's time limit to degree and the student's time limit will be extended to include one additional semester for an approved PLoA. There are more details on this policy here: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-4-5>

Permission to Study Elsewhere / Consortium Classes

Sociology graduate students may take graduate courses at another accredited institution and apply these credits to a master's or doctoral degree with prior approval. Approval must be secured in writing from the Graduate or MA Director and the dean of CHSS and submitted to Mason's Office of the University Registrar before registering at the other institution. These credits are subject to all the other conditions given above for transfer credit, including limits on numbers of credits that

can be taken elsewhere. More information on how to request permission to study elsewhere can be found here: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/gradcourseelsewherereq>

Sociology graduate students are also eligible to take course through the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Credits earned through the consortium are considered resident, not transfer, credits, and are therefore not subject to transfer of credit conditions or limitations. Credits earned through the consortium are considered courses taken outside of the department and do count toward the maximum two courses students can take outside of the department and have them count toward their degree.

You can get more information on taking consortium courses here: <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/enrollconsortium> and find the consortium registration form here: <http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Consortium-Registration-Form.pdf>.

Graduate Certificate Addition

Students may be enrolled in one graduate certificate program while they are also enrolled in the Sociology MA or Sociology PhD program. Students may share coursework between their sociology program and secondary graduate certificate. Details about graduate certificate policies can be found here: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-8>. The Graduate Secondary Certificate application form can be found here: <http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/GSCA.pdf>.

COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

Financial Support

Assistantships

The Graduate Director and faculty members on the Sociology Program Graduate Admissions Committee are responsible for awarding financial aid in the form of Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) and Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) to incoming students.

Assistantships are also available in other academic units and University departments and announcements of such will be circulated to students by email via the Graduate Director or graduate student listserv. These opportunities are also frequently posted in Handshake, Mason's employment portal. See more details on this below.

Fellowships

Fellowships are monetary awards made to the highest qualified students. No service to the department or university is required for these awards.

The Office of Graduate Education is also committed to helping graduate students without teaching or research responsibilities to find grants, fellowships and awards. They compile a robust list of fellowships, including those available through GMU and through external sources:

- **Internal Funding Resources:** <https://graduate.gmu.edu/financial-support/grants-fellowships-awards/internal>
- **External Funding Resources:** <https://chss.gmu.edu/research/funding/external-funding-sources>
- **CHSS Dean's Challenge Scholarships:** <https://chss.gmu.edu/scholarships>

More information on fellowships can be found here: <https://graduate.gmu.edu/financial-support/grants-fellowships-awards>.

Employment On and Off Campus

Full-time and part-time employees at George Mason are eligible for partial tuition exemption as a benefit of employment (see: <https://hr.gmu.edu/tuition-exemption/>). Students are also eligible to apply for wage positions at the university. These positions offer the benefit of allowing the student to work and pursue study at the same location, but do not carry tuition benefits. To search for wage positions go to <https://jobs.gmu.edu/> and search for hourly positions.

George Mason University has a robust employment network. Graduate students can also find positions on campus, as well as off campus through the University Career Services (<https://careers.gmu.edu/>). It is recommended that all graduate students activate their Handshake Account (<http://handshake.gmu.edu/>) – Mason's source for jobs, internships, career advice, and career fair details. More information about the Handshake portal can be found on the University Career Services website.

The University Career Services also has additional information and employment resources for international students. This can be accessed here: <https://careers.gmu.edu/diversity-resources/international-students>.

Student Travel Fund

George Mason University also offers modest funds for students to travel for participation in conferences and for research. Due to the limited funding, the Graduate Student Travel Fund will not be able to support those students who are only “attending” conferences. The fund will continue to offer support for those students who are making poster or paper presentations at conferences. Please see this website for more details: <https://graduate.gmu.edu/financial-support/conference-travel-funding>.

The Sociology and Anthropology Department may also have some funds to support graduate students who are traveling for conferences or for research purposes. Any opportunities for this and the application procedures will be announced as they become available. Funds are awarded competitively on the basis of merit and need.

Student Well-Being

If you are concerned about yourself, or feel that one of your fellow classmates may need professional mental health or counseling services, please reach out to the Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>. SACC provides individual support, including short-term interventions with students who have alcohol or drug concerns, support for financial well-being, support for food insecurity (Patriot Pantry), and support for survivors of sexual and interpersonal violence.

Mason’s Counseling and Psychiatry Services (CAPS) also provides a wide range of free services to students, faculty, and staff. Services are provided by a staff of licensed clinical psychologists, social workers, professional counselors, learning specialists, and a psychiatrist. You can access more information or make an appointment here: <https://caps.gmu.edu/>.

Additionally, Mason partners with TimelyMD to deliver TimelyCare (timelycare.com/gmu) – a virtual mental health and well-being platform for students. The service provides 24/7 access to virtual care at no cost to augment CAPS services.

Graduation Resources

- [Graduation Information \(Registrar's Office\)](#)
- [George Mason University Commencement](#)
- [Commencement Information from the Registrar's Office](#)
- [Apply to Graduate \(Registrar's Office\)](#)

Graduation Checklist: **Master's Students**

- [Master's Graduation Checklist Spring](#)
- [Master's Graduation Checklist Fall](#)
- [Master's Graduation Checklist Summer](#)

Graduation Checklist: **Doctoral Students**

- [Doctoral Graduation Checklist Spring](#)
- [Doctoral Graduation Checklist Fall](#)
- [Doctoral Graduation Checklist Summer](#)

Mason Student Resources: Summary

Name of Resource	Description of Resource
Assistive Technology Initiative	Manages the production of accessible text for Mason students with disabilities. They also ensure access to information technology and communications to the entire university community through the use of adaptive equipment and provision of technical assistance.
Center for Community Mental Health	Mason's Center for Community Mental Health is the main training clinic for Mason doctoral candidates in clinical psychology and other behavioral health disciplines. CCMH provides evidence-based, accessible, affordable and culturally sensitive therapy and testing services to our Northern Virginia community.
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Leverages programs and services focused on advocacy and direct student support to strengthen equity and inclusion at George Mason University. Our advising fosters opportunities for identity development, cross-cultural engagement, and inclusive learning communities, affirming the indivisible aspects of all our identities. Our three areas: Student Access and Equity (SAE) , Student Engagement for Racial Justice (SERJ) , and LGBTQ+ Resources , serve as resources to those in the Mason Community who seek to meaningfully engage and interact with people with different identities and intersections to co-create an equitable campus environment.
Copyright Resources Office	Provides assistance to faculty and students regarding copyright policies.
Counseling and Psychological Services	CAPS is a mental health center that is dedicated to promoting the emotional and psychological health and wellness of our students, provide time-limited individual and group counseling, referral to community mental health providers, psychiatric and crisis counseling, and academic and wellness workshops.

<u>Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment</u>	Leverages programs and services focused on advocacy and direct student support to strengthen equity and inclusion at George Mason University. Our advising fosters opportunities for identity development, cross-cultural engagement, and inclusive learning communities, affirming the indivisible aspects of all our identities. Our three areas: <u>Student Access and Equity (SAE)</u> , <u>Student Engagement for Racial Justice (SERJ)</u> , and <u>LGBTQ+ Resources</u> , serve as resources to those in the Mason Community who seek to meaningfully engage and interact with people with different identities and intersections to co-create an equitable campus environment.
<u>Disability Services</u>	Serves individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing and blind/low vision, and those with mobility and medical difficulties. They also serve those with ADHD, Autism, learning, temporary and psychological disabilities, and more. Accommodations are developed on a case-by-case basis through an individual interview and documentation. Accommodations can be implemented at any time during a student's enrollment.
<u>International Programs and Services</u>	Provides guidance to students and scholars studying and working at George Mason University on immigration, employment and taxation, and adjustment issues, while fostering cross-cultural understanding through programs highlighting global themes.
<u>Learning Services</u>	Services include support to students with learning differences, individual study skills counseling, individualized programs of study, and provision of tutoring resources. Presentations on a variety of academic skill topics are available to the university community. The programs are open to all George Mason University students free of charge. Services are confidential and use of these services does not become part of the student's academic record.
<u>LGBTQ+ Resource Center</u>	Provides supports and resources to the LGBTQ+ members and allies to increase understanding and awareness to the Mason community.
<u>Mason Student Services Center</u>	Provides one-stop, integrated information and referrals regarding admissions, registrar, student accounts, and financial aid.
<u>Military Alliance Program (M.A.P.)</u>	Provides faculty and staff participants with an understanding of military students at Mason and how they can be supported. Upon completion of M.A.P. training, participants are certified by the Office of Military Services as a "Military Friendly Staff Member".

<u>Office of Academic Integrity</u>	Provides information on the honor code and resources for students and faculty.
<u>Office of Coalition Building and Diversity Education (CBDE)</u>	Through collective and collaborative work with campus and community partners, supports, builds, and enhances the understanding of interpersonal identities to respond to systemic inequities, through engagement, advocacy, and education. CBDE aims to be a catalyst for change by creating, promoting and sustaining an inclusive and equitable campus community.
<u>Office of the Ombudsman</u>	Acts as a unique resource for students to discuss concerns and complaints and serves as a safe space to facilitate the resolution of conflicts. As an impartial party, the office does not take sides in any conflict and operates independently of any formal channels at the university.
<u>Safe Zone</u>	Creates a safer, more welcoming and inclusive campus environment to strengthen community and encourage networking among faculty, staff, and students toward the goal of supporting the well-being of LGBTQ people.
<u>Social Action and Integrative Learning (SAIL)</u>	Fosters experiential learning opportunities on campus, regionally, and globally for the Mason community with a particular emphasis on effecting positive social change. SAIL is Mason's home for service-learning initiatives.
<u>Student Conduct</u>	Provides information about university policies, the student conduct process, and resources for faculty related to addressing student behaviors of concerns and other disruptive behaviors.
<u>Student Health Insurance</u>	<p>Health insurance is available to eligible (enrolled) students through Aetna Student Health. The Student Health Insurance Plan provides coverage for illnesses and injuries locally and when you travel either domestically or abroad and is accepted by many local healthcare providers. The student health insurance plan is structured to meet federal mandates set forth by the Affordable Care Act.</p> <p>Once a student graduates, if enrolled in the plan, the student is still covered under the Student Health Insurance Plan for the remainder of the policy year.</p>
<u>Student Health Services</u>	SHS is an on-campus healthcare clinic staffed by dedicated medical professionals who provide accessible and affordable health care to all

	enrolled students. SHS provides diagnosis and treatment of illnesses and minor injuries, health counseling, lab testing, and a variety of other services.
<u>Student Support and Advocacy Center</u>	Offers educational programs and support services to help students address issues related to personal wellness, interpersonal violence, and alcohol and drug use. SSAC also assists students who are encountering life challenges or crises.
<u>University Career Services</u>	Provides information on career choices, internships and employment, and graduate and professional school.
<u>University Life</u>	Enhances students' in- and out-of-class experiences, and facilitates interactions among faculty, staff, and other students. These resources help students achieve academically, stay healthy, get involved with campus life, find jobs, and identify resources to enrich their learning.
<u>University Writing Center</u>	Offers free individual writing consultations for graduate students. Also offers online writing guides on specific genres of writing, citation style, and other topics.