

Rural Sociology Graduate Program Handbook

Requirements and Policies 2019-20

Director of Graduate Studies

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Penn State Policies on Graduate Education

Requirements of the Graduate School as given in the Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/whitebook/>) apply to all graduate degrees and procedures of the Department. The complete listing of Graduate School policies and resources for students can be found at <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/student/>. In case of conflicts between the program handbook and Graduate School policies, the latter take precedence. Students should also be familiar with the Penn State academic calendar (http://registrar.psu.edu/academic_calendar/calendar_index.cfm), and with deadlines periodically announced by the Graduate School (<http://gradsch.psu.edu/calendar/>).

Students must understand and comply with all requirements and provisions of the Rural Sociology Graduate Handbook that is in effect at the time of their matriculation into the program. Students who complete their M.S. degree in the Rural Sociology program at Penn State and then are admitted to the Ph.D. program must comply with the handbook that is in effect in the semester in which they begin their Ph.D. program.

Academic Integrity

According to University Faculty Senate Policy 49-20 (<http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20>), “Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University’s Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.”

Students should bear in mind the importance of academic integrity in their course work, assistantship and wage payroll work, and work on theses and dissertations. If a student has questions about whether a particular action would be a violation of academic integrity, the student’s academic advisor and the appropriate departmental Graduate Committee can provide guidance. The College of Agricultural Sciences’ guidelines for implementing Policy 49-20 are available online at <http://agsci.psu.edu/students/resources/academic-integrity>.

Graduate Programs in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education

The department has multiple graduate programs administered by the graduate faculty of the relevant disciplinary cluster. Each cluster determines the operation of their respective graduate programs within the regulatory boundaries of Penn State and the Graduate School. The person responsible for leading each graduate degree program at AESE is the program's Director of Graduate Studies, who is a tenured faculty member of the department and a member of the program's graduate faculty.

Conflict resolution not regulated at the university level starts in the graduate program, and it is facilitated by the Director of Graduate Studies. If the issue cannot be resolved within the program, the case is moved to the Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education to resolve disagreements. If resolution cannot be achieved within the academic unit, further steps are determined by the relevant procedures in Appendices II, III, and IV of the Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin.

Core Penn State Values in Graduate Education

The Rural Sociology Graduate Program adheres to the Penn State Graduate School's core values of creating a positive climate, promoting academic success, and facilitating students' career development. We support these values by implementing practices that:

- contribute to a respectful, stimulating, and supportive climate,
- promote students' academic success, and
- promote the career development of students.

A complete set of expectations for faculty, staff, and student behavior to implement these values and practices are included in the Appendix to this handbook. The Graduate School's statement can be found at <http://gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty/recommended-practices/>.

Rural Sociology Graduate Program Policies and Procedures

Students must understand and comply with all requirements and provisions of the Rural Sociology Graduate Handbook that is in effect at the time of their matriculation into the program. Students who complete their M.S. degree in the Rural Sociology program at Penn State and then are admitted to the Ph.D. program must comply with the handbook that is in effect in the semester in which they begin their Ph.D. program.

1. Major Advisor and Graduate Committee

1.1. Temporary Advisor

An incoming graduate student is assigned to a temporary academic advisor, usually the Director of Graduate Studies, who consults with the new student to identify deficiencies, design a proposed program of study, and provide assistance in initial scheduling of courses. The temporary advisor also may assist the student in the selection of a permanent academic advisor.

1.2. Academic Advisor and Graduate Committee

The academic advisor serves as chairperson of the student's Master's or Doctoral committee. It is the responsibility of the graduate committee to assist the student in planning a course of study consistent with his/her interests and with departmental and Graduate School policy, supervise research required for the degree, and administer examinations. It is ultimately the responsibility of the student to ensure that all the requirements for his/her degree have been met.

Graduate students should seek an academic advisor during their first semester in the program, and are required to obtain an academic advisor by the end of their first year in the graduate program. Any student who fails to obtain an academic advisor by the end of their first year could be considered to be making insufficient progress toward completion of degree. Students are permitted to switch academic advisors at any time during their graduate program.

1.3. Master's Committee

The committee of each master's candidate consists of at least three faculty members, the chairperson of which must be a member of the Graduate Faculty in Rural Sociology. More than half of the committee members (e.g., at least 2 out of 3 committee members) must be Graduate Faculty members in Rural Sociology. Students participating in dual-title programs must also ensure that the composition of their committee conforms to requirements of their dual-title program. Four dual-title options are possible (see below for further information).

1.4. Doctoral Committee

A doctoral committee consists of four or more faculty members, all of whom must be active members of the Graduate Faculty as recognized by the Graduate School. More than half of the committee (i.e., 3 out of the 4 or 5 committee members) must be members of the Rural Sociology Graduate Faculty.¹

1.4.1. Committee Formation:

Doctoral committees are formally appointed by the Graduate School and reviewed annually by the Director of Graduate Studies. Committees are typically formed during the student's third semester in the program, but no later than the end of the fourth semester. Students must work with their advisors and the Graduate Program Coordinator to conduct an initial meeting of the committee within one semester of formation and submit the appropriate forms with committee member signatures to the Graduate School.

¹ A list of Rural Sociology Graduate Faculty can be found at: <https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/>.

1.4.2. Committee Composition:

Dissertation Committee Chair (and Co-Chair, if applicable): Must be a member of the Rural Sociology Graduate Faculty and aligned with the student's chosen area of concentration. The Chair is responsible for arranging and conducting all Committee meetings, ensuring all Rural Sociology Graduate Program, Graduate Council, and Graduate School standards and requirements are met, and any conditions set by the Committee are fulfilled. Students pursuing a dual-title degree must consult with the dual-title degree program requirements, as they may require that the Committee Chair or Co-Chair must be a Graduate Faculty member of that dual-title program.

Outside Field Member: At least one regular member of the doctoral committee must represent a field outside the student's major field of study to provide a broader range of disciplinary perspectives and expertise within the committee. This person may be the same as the Outside Unit Member.

Outside Unit Member: The primary appointment of at least one regular member of the doctoral committee must be from an administrative unit outside the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, & Education, and not a member of the Rural Sociology Graduate Faculty, to avoid potential conflicts of interest. In the case of co-chairs, the Outside Unit Member must be from outside the administrative home(s) of both co-chairs.

Minor Program Member (if applicable): Students pursuing a graduate minor must include at least one Minor Program Member on their Dissertation Committee. The Minor Program Member must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and a member of that minor graduate program. Minor Program members are responsible for providing the student and the Dissertation Committee with information, advice, and perspective on student progress in fulfilling the graduate minor requirements in the graduate program they represent.

Special Members (if applicable): Dissertation Committees may include Special Members who are not members of the Graduate Faculty but are otherwise qualified and have particular expertise in the student's research area. Special Members do not have to be affiliated with Penn State.

Students should work with their advisor to identify faculty members to meet these requirements and to support their chosen areas of concentration (described below).²

1.4.3. Committee Meeting and Reporting Requirements

All graduate committees must meet at least once annually (defined as the academic year + summer, or August through July) to review student progress and submit a report of that assessment to the Director of Graduate Studies. Annual meetings are intended to ensure students are receiving regular assessments of progress and feedback from all committee members. The following general schedule (subject to individual student timelines and needs) is suggested:

- Year 2: form committee; committee reviews student progress toward the degree, courses taken and planned, timeline, and initial plans for the dissertation.
- Year 3: conduct oral defense of comprehensive examination; additional discussion of dissertation proposal and plans as needed.
- Year 4: assess dissertation progress or conduct oral defense of dissertation if appropriate.

² Additional information about committees can be found on the Graduate School webpage: <http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/degreeReq1#doctoralAdvisors>.

If students' programs are longer than the four years outlined here, the committee must continue to meet at least annually until the student has completed the oral defense of the dissertation.

It is strongly preferred that the student and all committee members meet at the same time. To facilitate this, committee meetings outside of the oral defenses of the comprehensive examination and the dissertation are allowed to have students and/or committee members participating via distance technology.³

For each annual committee meeting except the final oral dissertation defense, the committee chair (and co-chair) is responsible for submitting a written report to the DGS, which will be reviewed and placed in student files. This report shall capture the committee assessment of the student's progress in relation to coursework and research, review the quality of the student's proposed or on-going research, identify professional development needs or opportunities, and describe plans for future meetings. All committee members must have the opportunity to participate in the writing of the meeting report, including the ability to provide dissenting opinions as appropriate. The student and all committee members must sign (physically or electronically) the final report prior to submission. A report template is available on the program's Canvas page.⁴

2. Requirements for the Master of Science Degree in Rural Sociology

M.S. candidates in Rural Sociology are expected to develop foundational understandings of rural sociology, research methods and statistics, and a general awareness of basic substantive, theoretical and methodological issues of topics relevant to rural sociology (such as demography, food and agricultural systems, environment and natural resources, community and community development, or international development).

Requirements for M.S. students include the following:

- R SOC 502 "Use of Theory in Rural Sociology"
- R SOC 513 "Research Methods in Rural Social Sciences"
- Two graduate-level (500 and above) statistics courses (selected in consultation with the graduate program coordinator and the student's advisor)
- R SOC 516 "Change in Rural Society" OR R SOC 517 "International Social Change"
- 2 credits of AEREC/RSOC 590 "Colloquium" [this is a 1-credit course to be taken the first semester in the program and at least 1 additional credit during the course of the program]
- Two additional 3-credit graduate-level (500 and above) courses in Rural Sociology
- R SOC 600 "Research Thesis Credits" [6 credits required; typically taken in the 2nd year of study]

Substitutions for any of these courses require prior consultation with and approval by the Director of Graduate Studies.

A minimum of 36 total graduate level credits (400 level or above) are required for the M.S. degree. All M.S. graduate students are required to have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 for graduation.

³ The oral defenses of the comprehensive examination and dissertation are subject to Graduate School rules that limit participation via distance technology. For additional information, see <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-606-comprehensive-examination-research-doctorate/> and <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-608-final-oral-examination-research-doctorate/>.

⁴ Additional information about this policy may be found on the Graduate School website: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-603-phd-committee-responsibilities-temp/>.

M.S. students devise a plan of study in close consultation with their advisor, both to ensure they meet the above requirements and to craft a tailored curriculum that addresses the student's academic background and interests and advances their career goals. A minor is possible but not required.

M.S. students will have a final oral examination of their thesis that is administered by their M.S. committee. The thesis should reflect original research in the field of rural sociology. Under the guidance of the advisor, a written draft of the complete thesis will be submitted to the committee two weeks in advance of the exam. The M.S. thesis exam is generally preceded by a brief (15-20 minute) presentation on the thesis research that is open to all members of the department.

It is expected that M.S. students on a ½ time assistantship will complete the degree in 4 semesters, not including summers. All requirements for a master's degree (including successful defense of the thesis) must be met within eight years of admission to the program.

Additional information about the Master's Degree requirements can be found at <http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/masters>.

3. Requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Rural Sociology

The principal aim of the doctoral program in Rural Sociology is to develop the advanced sociological research and analytical capacities necessary for understanding and addressing the problems, structures, and processes affecting the well-being of rural people and places and the sustainability of communities and landscapes in domestic and international contexts. To this end, the student selects relevant Rural Sociology courses as well as courses in complementary academic fields, with guidance from the advisor and other members of their Ph.D. advisory committee.

For students entering the program with a MS/MA (or its equivalent) from a different educational institution, a minimum of 36 graduate-level credits (400- and 500-level courses; not including 600-level course credits) are required, of which at least 27 credits must be in Rural Sociology. Students who complete the MS in Rural Sociology at Penn State must complete at least 48 graduate level credits (400- and 500-level courses; not including 600-level course credits), of which at least 27 credits must be in Rural Sociology. Courses completed during their MS program at Penn State count toward the Ph.D. course requirements. Additional graduate-level courses may be taken in complementary academic fields to supplement the core areas of concentration, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor and committee. All Ph.D. graduate students are required to have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 for graduation.

3.1. Areas of Concentration

All Ph.D. students are expected to become strongly prepared in four areas: Rural Sociology, Methods and Statistics, and two additional areas of concentration of their choice. All students must meet Rural Sociology requirements and the methods and statistics requirements, as noted below.

3.1.1. Rural Sociology Area Requirements

Required rural sociology courses provide a broad overview of rural sociology's theoretical roots, intellectual connections and current uses, as well as the substantive issues facing rural people and places both domestically and internationally. Three courses are needed to meet the rural sociology area requirements.

- R SOC 502 "Use of Theory in Rural Sociology"
- R SOC 516 "Change in Rural Society"
- R SOC 517 "International Rural Social Change"

3.1.2. Methods and Statistics Area Requirements

Ph.D. students in Rural Sociology need to become equipped with a minimum level of research skills early in their degree program. This is accomplished either through prior instruction, whether in Masters training at Penn State or at another institution, or by enrollment in research methods and statistics courses in the Ph.D. program. Ph.D. students must meet the following four-course minimum requirements, recognizing that thorough competency often requires additional coursework:

- R SOC 513 “Research Methods in the Rural Social Sciences”
- R SOC 514 “Qualitative Methods”
- Two graduate-level (500 and above) statistics courses (selected in consultation with the student’s advisor)

3.1.3. Areas of Concentration

Ph.D. students must declare two additional areas of concentration prior to the comprehensive examination. The areas of concentration should be a declaration of the student’s substantive expertise and reflect the core strengths of the Rural Sociology program. The areas of concentration should be built and substantiated through coursework and relevant research experiences. Generally, it is expected that students will take two courses in each of these areas, which provides evidence for effective exposure to the relevant field. Students should supplement coursework with additional training and/or research experience to indicate satisfactory performance in these areas of concentration to the advisor and committee members.

The Rural Sociology program has four core areas of concentration: sociology of food and agriculture, natural resources/environmental sociology, community and international development, and rural social demography. Each concentration area, along with the core foundational RSOC course, is listed below. The Rural Sociology program supports four dual-degree options – Demography; Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment (HDNRE); International Agriculture and Development (INTAD); and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (see below). Students pursuing a dual-title program must declare one of their areas of concentration in correspondence with the chosen dual-title program. In unique circumstances, students may design their own areas of concentration, in consultation with their advisor, and with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies at least 3 weeks prior to the comprehensive examination.

Area of Concentration	Foundation course	Electives
Rural Sociology	RSOC 502; RSOC 516; RSOC 517	
Methods and Statistics	RSOC 513; RSOC 514; RSOC 522; RSOC 573	RSOC 597 (Spatial Stats)
Sociology of Agriculture and Food	RSOC 508	RSOC 597 (Sustainability; (Gender, Ag., and Envir)
Environmental and Natural Resource Sociology	RSOC 555	RSOC 597 (Gender, Ag. and Envir; Sustainability)
Rural Social Demography	external to dept	RSOC 525; RSOC 530; RSOC 516; RSOC 597 (Pop and Envir)
Community & International Development	RSOC 552; RSOC 516; RSOC 517	RSOC 525; RSOC 530

3.2.RSOC 590 Requirement

If an entering Ph.D. student has not completed their M.S. degree in Rural Sociology at Penn State, he or she is also expected to complete two semesters of RSOC 590. Students should take one credit in the fall and one credit in the spring of their first year.

3.3. Waivers and Substitutions

Students should discuss substitutions for any of these course and credit requirements with their adviser. Requests for waivers/substitutions require prior consultation with and approval by the Director of Graduate Studies.

3.4. Qualifying examination

A qualifying examination must be taken and passed by all students intending to earn the Ph.D.⁵ The examination is administered by the Rural Sociology Graduate Program Committee prior to the start of the student's third semester and after completion of at least 18 graduate (400- or 500-level) credits. Most students will take the exam during the summer between the first and second year in the program. No student may advance to the comprehensive examination without this formal record of having taken and passed the qualifying examination.

3.4.1. Examination Content

The exam will cover basic knowledge of theory, methods, and content appropriate for all Rural Sociology students regardless of chosen areas of concentration. Material will be based on first year course work (to include RSOC 502, 516, 517, 513) as offered during the previous year). In addition, the Graduate Program Committee will make available a reading list of high priority content to supplement course offerings prior to the examination. There is no oral examination.

3.4.2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must have completed at least 18 graduate level (500-level) credits at Penn State. Students must have at least a 3.0 GPA, have no deferred or incomplete grades, and be in good academic standing in the program (i.e., not on probation) at the time of the exam. Part-time students and those with other exigent circumstances who do not meet these criteria must work with their advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to identify the appropriate timing for the examination while adhering to the timeline for adequate academic progress.

3.4.3. Administration

The qualifying examination is a closed-book, written exam to be conducted on one day. The exam will be scheduled in the summer, typically late July or early August. All students will receive the same examination form. Students will be provided with university-owned computers for writing their answers and instructions for securing and protecting their written answers. Students for whom English is not their first language will be provided with up to two hours additional time to complete their exams. Students with documented disabilities and/or special needs should work with Student Disability Resources and the DGS to identify appropriate accommodations at least 2 months prior to the exam date. Further rules and procedures will be provided prior to the examination. Rules related to notes, access to outside materials, communication with others in the room or with external persons will be strictly enforced. Failure to comply with these rules falls under the Student Conduct policy and may lead to failure of the examination and termination from the program.

3.4.4. Grading Procedures and Communication

Evaluation criteria to be used by the Rural Sociology Graduate Committee members will include demonstrated knowledge of the subject, responsiveness to the question, and organization/coherence of the response. Written English competence will also be assessed by committee members. Grading outcomes for each exam include:

- Pass
- Fail - With opportunity to re-write some or all of the exam
- Fail - With no opportunity to re-write

⁵ In accordance with the Graduate School Policy GCAC 604: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-604-qualifying-exam-temp/>.

Students can re-write the exam (partially or fully) once. Failure a second time will result in termination from the program. Results of the exam will be reported to each student in writing within 30 days of completing the exam. The results will also be shared with the student's advisor. The report of results may include recommendations for addressing deficiencies, as needed.

3.4.5. Assessment of English Competency

The Graduate Committee will assess competence in the English language when reviewing the written exam responses. This determination will be reported to the Graduate School at the completion of the exam. Deficiencies will be noted in the written report sent to the student and advisor.

3.5. Comprehensive Examination

Each Ph.D. candidate must pass a comprehensive (combined written and oral) examination in rural sociology, research methods and statistics, and two chosen areas of concentration. The student's graduate committee administers the comprehensive exam after the candidate's coursework has been substantially completed, typically just prior to or during the 3rd year.

The student is required to notify the Graduate Program Coordinator of the Comprehensive Exam date and time no later than three weeks prior to the intended oral exam date. The paperwork must be filed and submitted to the Graduate School, as a two week notice is required by the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services to schedule the comprehensive examination. The qualifying examination results, and the doctoral committee appointment form, must have already been filed with the Graduate School prior to scheduling the comprehensive exam. To schedule the exam, students must be in good academic standing (e.g., not on probation or have other concerns related to academic progress), have a minimum GPA of 3.0, and not have any deferred or missing grades.⁶ When a period of more than six years has elapsed between the passing of the comprehensive examination and the completion of the program, the student is required to pass a second comprehensive examination before the final oral examination will be scheduled.

3.6. Dissertation Format Options

The doctoral dissertation represents a significant contribution to knowledge. As such, it should demonstrate the Ph.D. candidate's ability to design and conduct rigorous sociological research on an important theoretical or substantive issue, to select and effectively apply appropriate social science research methods, and to contribute to relevant academic and policy or practice debates. The dissertation must also demonstrate the candidate's ability to communicate in writing and orally in a manner that is accurate, precise, concise, and well-substantiated.

Dissertation papers may not be wholly or substantially submitted for publication prior to the dissertation defense without prior, written approval of all members of the student's committee. Students who submit papers to a journal must request and receive copyright permission from the publisher of the journal to use the paper in his/her dissertation prior to the defense. (Students must notify the publisher that the dissertation may be made available on-line through the Penn State library system.) Paper revisions based on reviewer/editor feedback (either acceptance or revise and resubmit) prior to the defense need to be approved by the committee members prior to submission. Any paper submitted for publication prior to the defense may not be co-authored.

There are two main format options for Rural Sociology dissertations. Students should choose their dissertation format in close consultation with their advisor and doctoral committee.

6 Additional information available at <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-606-comprehensive-examination-research-doctorate/>

3.6.1. Traditional Monograph Format

The traditional continuous monograph is a format in which students describe their research stemming from a core set of integrated research questions. This approach draws from a combined, coherent theoretical and literature base, and culminates in a series of integrated results and conclusions.

3.6.2. Three-Paper Format

A three-paper dissertation is a format in which the research develops from a broad research question or focus but the research is presented as three distinct, stand-alone papers, each written in the model of a manuscript to be submitted to an academic journal. The dissertation should include a first chapter to introduce the broader problem and wider scholarship uniting the three dissertation papers and a final chapter to synthesize the contribution and implications across the set of papers. The need for 3 papers should be made clear, and should not represent minor variations that would be better presented in 1 or 2 papers.

3.7. Final Oral Examination

Paperwork is filed for the Final Oral Exam (dissertation defense) in the same manner as for the Comprehensive Exam – at least three weeks prior to the oral exam date. In practice, Ph.D. students should anticipate scheduling their dissertation defense well in advance of the intended date to ensure the availability of all members of the committee. Students are advised to check carefully regarding University deadlines for completion of the defense and submission of the final draft in making their plans, especially if they wish to receive their degrees by a particular date.⁷ The exam is administered by the student's doctoral committee. The student's presentation of the dissertation research is generally open to the public, with the actual exam conducted privately by the committee after the presentation.

3.8. Time limits

A doctoral student is required to complete the program, including acceptance of the doctoral dissertation, within eight years after the date of successful completion of the qualifying examination.

Additional information about the Doctoral Degree requirements can be found at <http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/degree/requirements/degreeReq1>.

4. English Language Competency

The ability to effectively and competently read, write, and speak the English language is critical for success in Rural Sociology at The Pennsylvania State University. Coursework in our program involves extensive reading on topics that span the range from the philosophical to the technical, and the ongoing need to use English to express information and ideas in both verbal discussions and written assignments. Both domestic and international students' English language competency should be demonstrated by the following criteria:

- Students must be capable of reading and comprehending sociological material written for advanced undergraduate audiences.
- Students must be able to compose clear and understandable English, with a minimum of blatant grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors.
- Students must be able to speak English clearly and correctly, both extemporaneously and in formal presentations.

Deficiencies will be discussed and addressed as part of the plan of study approved by the student's committee and during the qualifying examination. Deficiencies must be addressed prior to the comprehensive examination.

⁷ Deadlines can be found at: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/thesisdissertationperformance-calendar/>. Note deadlines associated with declaring the intent to graduate, format review, oral defense, and final submission to the graduate school.

5. Registration Requirements

Master's Candidates do not have to be registered the semester in which they graduate. The Department will notify the Graduate School when all requirements are met.

Ph.D. Candidates must have continuous registration from passing the comprehensive exam through graduation. Ph.D. students who have completed the comprehensive exam must enroll in R SOC 601 (dissertation research credits). However, if they have successfully defended the dissertation before the graduation semester starts, they do not have to register for the graduation semester. For example, a student who completes the defense in early August, past the Summer defense deadline but before Fall semester begins, would not have to register for Fall even though that is when they would officially graduate. Students do not need to register for summer semesters unless the student will officially graduate at the end of the summer semester (August).

6. Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines

M.S. theses and Ph.D. dissertations must conform to the regulations of the Graduate School as given in the Thesis Guide which can be found here: <http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/>

When the M.S. thesis or the Ph.D. dissertation is completed to the satisfaction of the appropriate committee and the final oral examination has been passed, the members of the candidate's committee are to sign the appropriate signatory page. After the foregoing are completed, the thesis/dissertation is to be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for signature. The DGS will review the thesis/dissertation before affixing their signature. Each candidate is responsible for determining the time the DGS wishes for review far enough in advance of the Graduate School submission deadline that the review can be accomplished without undue time pressure.

Each student is expected to give a completed (pdf) copy to all committee members and the Department. A listserv has been created through which they can be sent – L-AESE-Thesis@lists.psu.edu.

7. Deferred Grades

The Graduate School has enacted a strict rule on deferred grades. See <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-400/gcac-401-grading-system/>. A deferred grade that is automatically converted to an F can only be changed with approval of the Graduate School. Please also be aware that, per Graduate School policy, students may not take the qualifying examination or the comprehensive examination if there are any deferred grades (DF) on their transcript.

8. Part-time Registration

8.1. Part-time MS option

Most students in the Rural Sociology MS program enroll full-time in coursework. However, on a case-by-case basis, students may be admitted to the program as part-time students. Part-time students need to complete the same course requirements but may do so while enrolled less than full-time in courses. Students enrolled part-time in the MS program must complete all coursework and successfully defend and deposit the MS thesis within 8 semesters of matriculation into the program. All other stipulations in the handbook (e.g., satisfactory academic progress, student conduct) apply to part-time students as well as full-time students. Students may begin the program part-time and later matriculate as a full-time student assuming satisfactory academic progress. Students enrolled part-time are not eligible for graduate research or teaching assistantships, fellowships, or other similar university appointments intended for graduate students.

Applicants considering part-time enrollment should indicate their interest as early as possible in the application and admission process.

8.2. Part-time PhD Option

Nearly all students in the Rural Sociology PhD program enroll full-time in coursework. However, on a case-by-case basis, students may be admitted to the program as part-time students. Part-time students need to complete the same course requirements. They may do so while enrolled part-time in coursework, but must meet the following Graduate School requirements:

- They must complete the entire program within the same time-to-degree requirements (8 years from the date of successful completion of the qualifying exam) as other students.
- They must complete two consecutive semesters within one 12-month period as a registered full-time student (9 credits or more). There are stipulations that allow full-time University employees enrolled in a PhD program to establish residency with 6 or more credits. See the Graduate School policy GCAC-601 for details.⁸
- Graduate school policy requires that all students complete the qualifying examination within 3 semesters of starting the graduate program, and after having completed at least 18 credits. Exceptions to this policy may be requested for part-time students. If an exception is requested and granted by the Graduate School, the Rural Sociology program will require that the qualifying examination must be completed within 5 semesters of matriculation into the program.
- All students, including part-time students, must maintain continuous registration. Part-time students who are full-time university employees who have completed their comprehensive examination must register for RSOC 611.

Additional markers of satisfactory academic progress are adjusted for part-time status as follows:

- Coursework must be completed within 8 semesters of matriculation
- Comprehensive examination must be completed within 10 semesters of matriculation
- Successful completion and defense of the dissertation within 12 semesters of matriculation

All other stipulations in the handbook (e.g., student conduct) apply to part-time students as well as full-time students. Students may begin the program part-time and later matriculate as a full-time student assuming satisfactory academic progress. Students enrolled part-time are not eligible for graduate research or teaching assistantships, fellowships, or other similar university appointments intended for graduate students. Applicants considering part-time enrollment should indicate their interest as early as possible in the application and admission process.

9. Termination of Graduate Study

A graduate student will not be permitted to continue in the Rural Sociology program for violation of academic or professional standards or for violation of University, Graduate School, Departmental, or Graduate program policies.

9.1. Annual Review of Student Progress and Performance

The Director of Graduate Studies, working with the Graduate Coordinator, will request students complete Activity Reports annually. These reports will be used to assess adequate progress, performance of assistantship duties, and involvement in professional activities among all students. The DGS will review these reports and provide feedback about each student's progress. In addition, advisors and committee members may identify students not making adequate progress and report these concerns to the Director of Graduate Studies for consideration.

⁸ <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-601-residency-requirement-research-doctorate/>

9.2. Termination for Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

Students may be terminated from the program for lack of academic progress, inadequate scholarly performance, or failure of examinations, each outlined below.

9.2.1. Lack of Academic Progress

Lack of academic progress for a graduate student in Rural Sociology is indicated if the student:

- a) Has not identified an advisor within the first year of the program;
- b) For MS students:
 - i) Has not completed required coursework within 6 semesters of matriculation into the MS program;
 - ii) Has not successfully passed the thesis defense within 8 semesters of matriculation into the MS program;
- c) For PhD students:
 - i) Has not formed a committee within 4 semesters of matriculation into the Ph.D. program;
 - ii) has not completed required coursework within 6 semesters of matriculation into the PhD program;
 - iii) Has not successfully passed the comprehensive exam within 7 semesters of matriculation into the PhD program;
 - iv) Has not successfully passed the dissertation defense within 12 semesters of matriculation into the PhD program.

Students violating these timelines will be notified by letter from the DGS and provided opportunity to present reasonable justification. Determinations of lack of academic progress may result in probation (as long as the student is not in violation of Graduate School timelines) or termination, as determined by the DGS. Students may appeal the determination, as outlined below.

9.2.2. Inadequate Scholarly Performance:

Inadequate scholarly performance is indicated if a student:

- Has a cumulative grade point average less than 3.0;
- Receives any grade of D or F, at any time during their course of study; or
- Receives deferred or incomplete (NG) grades (even if the work is subsequently completed and a grade is registered) during three or more semesters at any time during their course of study.

Students in these situations will enter probationary status for the following semester. Students and their advisors will be notified via a written letter from the DGS outlining conditions (e.g., repeated coursework, minimum grades, etc.) and related deadlines required to be removed from probation.

9.2.3. Failure of Examinations:

An overall failure in the thesis, qualifying, comprehensive, or final oral examination will result in termination from the program.

9.3. Probation and Termination Procedures

Students who exhibit unsatisfactory academic performance through the above criteria will be notified by the Director of Graduate Studies. Students may, at the determination of the DGS, be placed in probationary status. Students in probationary status are considered not in good academic standing and are consequently not eligible to complete pertinent milestones (e.g., qualifying examination, comprehensive examination, defenses) until they have completed the requirements to be removed from probation. They are also not eligible for financial support from the Department (e.g., assistantships, scholarships, professional development support, etc.).

The DGS, in consultation with the advisor and Department Head, will develop a formal letter including a set of criteria and related timeline that, if satisfied, would allow the student to be removed from probationary status. Failure to meet these requirements by the timelines specified in the letter will result in termination from the program. Students who are being terminated from the program will be notified via formal letter

from the Department Head. Students may enter probationary status for only one semester during the duration of their graduate program. Students who fall into probationary status for a second semester during any point in their graduate program will be terminated from the program.

9.4. Termination Appeals Process

When it is determined that a student is to be terminated, the student will be given written notice by the Department Head. The student will be advised in general terms the reason(s) for termination. Students wanting to appeal a termination may do so by following the Penn State Graduate School policy related to appeals of termination: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-803-procedures-termination-unsatisfactory-scholarship/>.

9.5. Violation of Professional Ethics or University Policy

A student may be terminated from the program if they violate University or Graduate School policies related to professional ethics; academic integrity; research misconduct; or discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and related inappropriate conduct (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/student/>).

Concerns about violations of professional ethics or academic integrity may be brought to the Director of Graduate Studies. They will consult with the Department Head and other relevant university offices, document the complaint, and investigate further to assess the severity and the circumstances of the concern. If the concerns are substantiated, the DGS, in consultation with the Department Head and the University's Code of Conduct Office (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/conduct/codeofconduct/>), will seek appropriate levels of response, which may include verbal warnings, written warnings, suspension from the program, and, if the violation is egregious, repeated, or affects the safety of other students, termination.

Students who have any other types of concerns (e.g., behavioral threats, bias, harassment, etc.) are encouraged to report these directly to the Office of Student Affairs: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/report>. If you feel like you or someone else is in immediate danger, please contact University Police at 814-863-1111 or call 911.

10. Dual Title Options

10.1. Demography

The Rural Sociology graduate program participates in the multidisciplinary dual-title graduate programs in demography. Interested students are able to earn a dual-title master's and/or doctoral degree in Rural Sociology and Demography. Dual-title students take additional required courses in demographic theory and methods that fall into four categories: disciplinary survey courses, demographic methods, seminars in demographic processes; and elective courses in population studies. The full description of the dual-title program, including all course offerings in the affiliated departments is available at <http://www.pop.psu.edu/demography/>. Faculty in Rural Sociology currently offer multiple courses that qualify for the Demography program: RSOC 530 (poverty and inequality), RSOC 525 (population and development), RSOC 516 (Rural Social Change), among others. These courses are appropriate for all rural sociology students with substantive interest in these areas, not just dual-degree demography students. These courses are also intended to prepare students for comprehensive exams in the demography concentration area.

10.2. Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment (HDNRE)

The Rural Sociology graduate program participates in the dual-title graduate program in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment (HDNRE). Interested students are able to earn a dual-title master's and/or doctoral degree in Rural Sociology and HDNRE. Dual-title students take additional required

courses including in Integrated Perspectives in HDNRE, Ethical Issues in HDNRE, HDNRE Colloquium, and select among other required courses which provide a foundation for engaging in HDNRE-related applied and basic research, teaching, and outreach. The full description of the HDNRE program is available at <http://agsci.psu.edu/graduatestudents/hdnre>. Faculty in Rural Sociology offer one required course in the core curriculum of HDNRE (RSOC 555: Human Dimensions of Natural Resources) and other courses which provide students with an understanding of theories and substantive natural resource and environmental issues. A thesis/dissertation on a natural resource and environment topic which includes social aspects of resource use is required of students in the dual-title degree program. See the program website for additional program requirements.

10.3. International Agriculture and Development (INTAD)

The Rural Sociology graduate program participates in both the M.S. and Ph.D. dual title programs in International Agriculture and Development (INTAD). INTAD enables students from various College of Agricultural Sciences graduate programs to develop expertise and skills, as well as acquire practical experience in international agriculture and development, in a context that also supports and draws on professional identification with the primary discipline. Faculty in Rural Sociology provide intellectual and administrative leadership to INTAD, including offering courses that fulfill program requirements and electives, including RSOC 517 (International Social Change) and RSOC 508 (Sociology of Food and Agriculture). At the core of the program is the course INTAD 820: International Agricultural Development Seminar. Each seminar session is led by professors from different departments with multiple international experiences and expertise in subject matter and process skills. The focus of this course changes annually to reflect issues in the global arena and faculty interests and expertise. A dissertation of an international agriculture and development topic is required of all students in the dual degree program. Further information about the program's requirements and opportunities can be found here: <http://agsci.psu.edu/international/graduatestudents/intad>.

10.4. Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies – WGSS

The Rural Sociology program participates in both the M.S. and Ph.D. dual degree programs in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies—WGSS. WGSS provides a context in which students can learn to synthesize knowledge within and across disciplinary boundaries. In addition, a dual-title degree program provides students with an opportunity for increased work within a pedagogical framework that encourages an interdisciplinary approach to teaching. For more information on this dual-degree, see: <http://www.womenstudies.psu.edu/graduate/degree-programs>. Course requirements for the dual-title program in Women's Studies may be found on their website. Required courses provide critical feminist theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical training. The program requires specified core courses and electives, which should be chosen in consultation with the advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies in Women's Studies.

11. Assistantships

Many graduate students hold research assistantships, and occasionally graduate students receive other forms of financial support from the Department. Graduate students receiving financial aid from outside the Department are included under the stated rules unless specified in the terms of their appointments.

Normally, a student with a half-time assistantship is expected to schedule 9-12 credits per semester. A student with a quarter-time assistantship may schedule 9-14 credits, and with a three-quarter-time assistantship, 6-8 credits may be scheduled. Only with prior approval from the student's advisor, the Department Head, and the Graduate School may the course load be increased or decreased beyond these ranges for a specific semester. Over a series of semesters the student's total credit load should conform to the general guidelines outlined above. For additional information, see the Graduate School page:

<http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/funding/assistantships/>. NOTE: Audited courses do not count toward assistantship credit levels.

Graduate assistantship stipends comprise an important portion of funds for research and provide the opportunity for students to work with faculty members and be exposed to various aspects of an academic program. Graduate students receiving departmental support are expected to actively engage in departmental research or perform services related to resident education or extension programs, depending on the nature of funding. The student will be expected to perform research and/or education duties in return for the assistantship stipend. Students on assistantships are also eligible for university benefits and tuition remission.⁹

Students who are part-time or are on probation are not eligible for assistantships.

All graduate assistantships require the following:

- (a) All half-time assistants will be expected to be available for performing services related to research and/or resident education or extension for an average of 20 hours per week; 30 hours per week for students on a 3/4-time assistantship and 10 hours per week for students on a 1/4-time assistantship. This is an 18-week commitment for a student on assistantship in the fall semester; an 18-week commitment for a student on assistantship in the spring semester; and a 12-week commitment for a student being paid in the summer semester. A graduate assistant may accept concurrent employment outside the University only with permission from the Department Head and the Director of Graduate Studies.
- (b) The faculty member for whom a graduate assistant works is the assistantship supervisor and may or may not be the same person as the academic advisor. The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible to the Department Head for the assignment of assistantship services.

MS students on a 1/2-time assistantship are eligible for up to 4 semesters of support. A Ph.D. student on a 1/2-time assistantship who did not receive their MS in the Rural Sociology program at Penn State will be eligible for up to 8 semesters of support. Students who complete both M.S. and Ph.D. in Rural Sociology are eligible for up to 10 semesters of support. All assistantship allocations are subject to the condition of adequate performance and satisfactory academic progress.

A student may request a one-semester extension of assistantship support through his or her advisor to the Director of Graduate Studies. The petition will be granted pending satisfactory progress toward the degree and availability of funds. Students are encouraged to seek funds from Penn State units and organizations external to Penn State to support their research or teaching activities. These funds are essential for providing support for students who need funds beyond the semester limits indicated above.

11.1. Termination of Assistantship

A student may lose an assistantship at any time due to unsatisfactory performance of research responsibilities and assigned duties, financial exigencies of the Department, unsatisfactory scholarly performance (as outlined above), or violations of professional ethics or university policy. Graduate assistants and faculty are encouraged to discuss work expectations at the beginning of each semester, and review performance throughout the semester.

Students' performance in their assistantship duties are formally assessed during the annual review process. The annual review document will include space to outline their performance of research responsibilities and assigned duties associated with their assistantship. The supervising faculty member will have the opportunity to add to the annual review document. Concerns about student performance of the assistantship or concerns about the relationship between the student and supervisor may be brought to the DGS or Department Head.

⁹ For additional information, see <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/funding/assistantships/>

Early communication and documentation are essential for working through concerns and identifying appropriate resolution options. Additional information about the procedure for termination of an assistantship can be found on the Graduate School page (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-804-termination-assistantships-inadequate-performance/>).

12. Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI)

All graduate students are expected to successfully complete the Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI) program as a requirement for graduation. The SARI program is an opportunity to engage graduate students broadly in a dialog surrounding issues pertinent to research ethics.

The SARI program has two parts:

- 1) During the first year of enrollment, graduate students are required to complete the online Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training program provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), available at <https://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari>. The online course consists of a series of modules. Each module contains text and case studies related to a particular topic followed by a quiz. Please note that it will take several hours (3-5 hours) to complete the entire course. Upon completion of the online program, send a copy of the certificate that you receive to the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- 2) Graduate students are also required to engage in an additional 5 hours of discussion-based RCR education prior to degree completion. The Colloquium for first-semester graduate students, RSOC 590, provides 3 of the 5 hours. Topics include publication practices and responsible authorship; peer review of manuscripts and proposals; acquisition, management, sharing, and ownership of data; conducting scientific research; and mentor/trainee selection and responsibility. Attendance is **mandatory** at the RSOC 590 classes dedicated to SARI topics, and absentees will need to make arrangements for alternative discussion-oriented SARI training. Students may also earn 2 discussion-based SARI hours by taking RSOC 513 (Research Methods in the Rural Social Sciences). HDNRE 575 (Ethics in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources) also provides 1 SARI hour.

Additional workshops and events that count toward the SARI requirements are available at <https://www.research.psu.edu/education/sari/sari-events>. Students who attend these workshops need to work with the Graduate Program Coordinator to file the completion certification.

Students will be expected to complete the requirements in their first year. Very rarely we have students who start in the Spring; they will be expected to complete the on-line RCR training in the Spring and to have completed all requirements by the end of the subsequent Fall semester. Students are reminded that successful completion of the SARI program is mandatory for graduation.

Appendix A: Graduate Education Core Values, Practices, and Responsibilities

	Faculty Responsibilities	Graduate Student Responsibilities
<p>Climate: <i>Practices that contribute to a respectful, stimulating, supportive climate</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Serve as a role model by demonstrating ethical, professional, and courteous behavior toward all students, staff, and faculty. 2. Be supportive, equitable, accessible, and respectful. 3. Promote an environment that is intellectually stimulating, collaborative, respectful, and collegial. 4. Recognize and respect the diversity within our community consistent with Penn State's overall commitment to diversity and inclusion. 5. Show sensitivity to the power imbalance in the faculty-student relationship. 6. Take into consideration a student's need to manage competing demands while maintaining timely progress towards their degree. 7. Meet with students to discuss topics such as climate, collegial relations, etc. should the need arise. 8. Refer students proactively to appropriate university resources to provide support (e.g. financial, physical/emotional health, career development). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate ethical, professional, and courteous behavior toward other students, staff, and faculty. 2. Recognize and respect the diversity within our community consistent with Penn State's overall commitment to diversity and inclusion. 3. Be proactive about communicating needs, concerns, etc. with faculty and staff, understanding that communication is a two-way endeavor. 4. Take into consideration, in interactions with faculty and staff, competing constraints on their time. 5. Inform relevant faculty of potential and/or existing conflicts, and work toward their resolution. In the event that a solution cannot be reached, students should seek assistance from graduate program chairs, department heads, college administrators of graduate education, program or college ombudsperson (if applicable), or the Graduate School.
<p>Academic Issues <i>Practices that promote students' academic success</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advise students on the selection of appropriate course work, thesis/dissertation committee and topic or capstone project, and completion of other benchmarks. 2. Set clear expectations and goals for students regarding their academic performance and progress toward degree completion. 3. Discuss policies and expectations for assistantship hours, responsibilities, and absences related to university closure, holidays, illness, etc. 4. Develop an appropriate schedule to meet with students to provide feedback on scholarly activities and progress. 5. Provide students with oversight, as appropriate, to the discipline in all relevant aspects of research, training and scholarship. 6. Guide and recommend training, study, and other resources to develop or enhance students' skills and competencies. 7. Devise effective ways of providing students with guidance and supervision during a prolonged absence should the need arise. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognize that while faculty and staff are there to assist and guide students, the student bears the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree. 2. Discuss expectations and goals regarding academic performance and progress toward degree completion with advisors, committees, and other relevant faculty members. 3. Maintain the highest ethical standards and academic integrity in all aspects of scholarship, teaching, research, and other responsibilities. 4. Be familiar with program and Graduate School policies governing graduate education and adhere to all program and Graduate School policies and deadlines. 5. Act proactively to improve research and scholarship skills (e.g. writing, presenting, teaching, etc.).

	8. Provide and discuss clear criteria for authorship and acknowledgement of contributions at the beginning of all collaborative projects.	
<p>Career Development Issues <i>Practices that promote the career development of students</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage participation in professional meetings, associations, collaborations, and opportunities within and beyond the university. Assist students with identifying resources to fund such activities. 2. Provide career advice, offer help with interview and application preparation, and write letters of recommendation in a timely manner. 3. Ensure that students receive assistance with developing the skills needed for a successful career in their field/discipline, including oral and written communication, and grant preparation as appropriate. 4. Recognize that students will pursue a variety of careers, including those outside of academia and/or their discipline, and assist them in achieving their chosen career goals. 5. Schedule meetings to discuss topics such as professional development, career objectives, and opportunities, etc. 6. Align assigned responsibilities and activities with students' academic/professional career development as appropriate. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take an active role in identifying and pursuing professional development opportunities. 2. Communicate with faculty members regarding career goals. 3. Seek mentoring and support/resources beyond faculty advisor (e.g. other faculty members, peers, and organizations).

Adapted from: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty/recommended-practices/>.

Signature Page

This page must be signed and returned to the Graduate Coordinator by August 31, 2019.

I, _____, have read the Rural Sociology Graduate Student Handbook. I understand and agree to adhere to the policies and procedures described in the Handbook.

(signature)

(date)