Admission Requirements

Admission to this program is contingent upon admission to the Graduate School (http://bulletins.wayne.edu/graduate/general-information/admission). In addition, applicants must satisfy the criteria listed below. Applications are considered for new admissions to the fall term only; all stages and materials in the application process must be completed by January 15.

Materials required for Ph.D. admission include:

1. Graduate Application (demographic and educational profile).
2. Official transcripts from past universities attended.
3. Three (3) letters of recommendation (at least two should be from university or college faculty members). Preferably, one recommendation letter should come from the student's Master's-level advisor. Students filing "change of status" forms are also required to submit three letters of recommendation.
4. Statement of Interest (describing applicants' reasons for graduate study in sociology; proposed areas of study, and career goals).
5. Writing sample (e.g. a term paper or report).
7. TOEFL scores.

G.R.E. scores will be considered, but will not be a binding criterion for admission. The Department realizes that scores on standardized tests are greatly influenced by social and cultural factors, and may not be accurate indicators of performance ability. A combined assessment of students' GPA, G.R.E. scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, writing sample, and statements of interest will be used to make admissions decisions.

TOEFL scores will also be considered. We are currently asking for paper-based TOEFL scores of 600 or above (or internet-based TOEFL scores of 100 or above) for entry into our Ph.D. program. Nonetheless, we will consider students who have a score of 550 or better on the paper version of the TOEFL (or 80 or better on the internet-based version of the TOEFL). The Department realizes that scores on standardized tests are greatly influenced by social and cultural factors, and may not be accurate indicators of performance ability.

Applicants should have a 3.5 grade point average (G.P.A.) in their master's degree work and/or previous graduate work. In particular, we will be looking at applicants' grades in any previous methods and theory courses.

Students must complete the following courses prior to taking any other Ph.D. level courses (or their equivalents): SOC 6050, SOC 6280, and SOC 7200. A minimum of a B or better (but preferably a grade of A) is required in all of these master's-level courses before enrolling in Ph.D.-level courses. If students are missing this master's-level coursework when they apply to the Ph.D. program, they may be placed in the M.A. program until they complete these courses.

PLEASE NOTE: Students who lack a master's degree in sociology, or have not yet completed the master's requirements in sociology at the time of application, may not be admitted directly into the Ph.D. program. They may be granted admission to the master's program, possibly on a "qualified" basis, in order to take courses in preparation for the Ph.D. program. If students are placed in the master's program to complete preliminary coursework, they will need to apply for a change of status into the Ph.D. program once they have completed this coursework. This change of status is not automatic, and the Graduate Admissions committee will be evaluating students' grades in master's-level courses when considering change of status applications. Any questions about this policy should be directed to the Graduate Director.

1. Students must earn at least ninety credits beyond the B.A. degree, which includes thirty credits in an M.A. degree (which can be transferred from another university in many cases), at least thirty Ph.D. credits in our doctoral program, and thirty dissertation credits. After finishing their required coursework, students working on dissertations must complete four consecutive semesters of Doctoral Dissertation Research (SOC 9991-SOC 9994). If a student has completed all dissertation credits, but still needs to work on the dissertation, then he or she may register for SOC 9995 (doctoral maintenance credits in sociology). SOC 9995 is zero credits and students pay a set fee to be registered; the student will be considered full-time if registered in this course number. A total of six to nine credits of the thirty Ph.D. credits may be earned outside the Department of Sociology (see item 5 below). Students with an M.A. degree from another university must file a transfer of credit form with their plan of work (see note about plan of work below), in order to get credit for up to thirty credits from another master's degree program outside of Wayne State.

2. Advanced Methods Coursework: Other required courses for the Ph.D. program in sociology include SOC 7260 (qualitative methods, 4 credits). Students will then choose either a qualitative track or quantitative track and take one additional methods course in their track. If students choose a qualitative track, they will take SOC 7500 (advanced qualitative methods). If students choose a quantitative track, they will take SOC 6290 (advanced statistics).

3. Specialization Coursework: The Department of Sociology offer Ph.D. specializations in 3 areas: Medical Sociology/Health, Race/ Gender Inequality, and Urban/Labor Studies. Students will take at least 12 credits in one of these areas within our Ph.D. program. Students will also complete Ph.D. preliminary examinations in their chosen specialization (see description of the preliminary exam process below).

Cognate Coursework: Students also will take 6-9 credits in a minor or cognate area (either in a department outside of sociology at Wayne State or in a second specialization area within our department), as part of their Ph.D. program. These cognate credits also can be transferred in from an M.A. degree that is not in sociology, pending approval of advisor and Graduate Director.

Plan of Work: All Ph.D. students must submit a Plan of Work to the Graduate School before 40 credits of coursework have been completed (typically at the end of the student's first full year in the Ph.D. program). This Plan of Work reviews all courses/credits that students will use towards their Ph.D. degrees. Students transferring in Master's credits from another university will need to attach a Transfer of Credit form to their Plan of Work. Students should work with their advisors to complete this plan of work.

Ph.D. Preliminary Exams: The written Ph.D. preliminary examination ("prelim") is taken after students complete their Ph.D. coursework, and before they begin the dissertation process. The Ph.D. prelim is given in January and August of each year, typically the week or two before classes resume (students should pay special attention to announcements about prelim dates for each semester). The Ph.D. prelim corresponds to students' areas of specialization; thus, students will elect to take one of the following prelims: medical/ health, race/ethnicity, gender, labor, or urban.

All Ph.D. prelims consist of 3 parts, taken over a 2 day period. The format is as follows:
1. Day One, Morning: Examination on sociological theory as applied to the student’s area of specialization.

2. Day One, Afternoon: Examination on research methods, as applied to the student’s area of specialization.

3. Day Two, Morning: Examination on the content of the individual student’s research interest as related to the dissertation.

Students should take their prelim soon after they have completed their required Ph.D. coursework in sociological theory, research methods, and their area of specialization. To apply to take the prelim, students should fill out the Prelim Application Form (http://www.clas.wayne.edu/Sociology) found on our website. Students should consult the chair of their specialization area for specific information about the specialization (i.e., courses that satisfy the Ph.D. specialization requirement, reading lists for the prelims, upcoming dates for the prelim, grading committee members, etc.)

Students must pass prelims in full before they can file for Ph.D. candidacy and begin their dissertations. Students receive two chances to pass Ph.D. prelims, but they should attempt to pass prelims on the first try (see guidelines for satisfactory academic progress below). If student fail their prelims a second time, they are dismissed from the Ph.D. program. Only in extremely rare circumstances are students granted a third chance at the prelim. Students should consult their advisors, the chair of their specialization area, and the Graduate Director before taking the prelim to ensure that they are ready to take the prelim. Students can also contact the Graduate Director to find out more about prelim policies.

If students are done with their required Ph.D. coursework but have not passed their prelims, they can enroll in SOC 9990 (pre-dissertation credits) in order to maintain active student status. Students are sometimes allowed to enroll early in SOC 9991 (the first set of dissertation credits) if they are taking those credits during the semester that they are taking prelims. Students can contact the Graduate Director to talk further about this possibility.

Ph.D. Candidacy Status: following successful completion of their Ph.D. coursework and Ph.D. prelims, the student should select a 4-person dissertation committee and fill out a “Recommendation for Ph.D. Candidacy” form (available on the Graduate School’s website). A dissertation committee includes three members of the sociology faculty (of which one is the student’s advisor) and one outside member (typically a faculty member from another department at Wayne State who has expertise in the student’s dissertation topic, but sometimes a student can find a faculty member from outside Wayne State who is willing to serve). All four committee members must sign onto a student’s dissertation committee and sign the candidacy form before students are allowed to become a Ph.D. candidate and begin their dissertation credits.

Dissertation Proposal: The dissertation proposal represents the oral qualifying exam for the purposes of the Graduate School. Examiners will be the student’s dissertation committee (as outlined above). The student will submit a dissertation proposal to his/her dissertation committee, after that proposal has been approved in full by the student’s advisor. Dissertation proposals include a short introductory chapter, a chapter of literature review, a chapter detailing students’ theoretical or conceptual framework (although sometimes this is combined with the literature review), and a methods chapter that proposes how they will engage in their dissertation research. The student will work with their dissertation advisor to finalize the proposal. Once the advisor approves the draft, the student will submit the proposal draft to the entire dissertation committee for review. Committee members will receive at least 3 weeks (preferably one month) to review the proposal draft and decide whether it is defensible. If all committee members agree that the proposal is defensible, an oral defense of the dissertation proposal will be scheduled. Students should consult with their advisors to prepare for this oral defense. If students pass the oral defense of their proposal, their committee members will sign the “Prospectus and Record of Approval” form (available on the Graduate School’s website). Once the student defends the dissertation proposal successfully, the student will work with their advisor to gain IRB approval (if necessary) for the dissertation research project and begin data collection. Dissertation proposals range in length, depending on the project. On average, students work on their dissertation proposals for two semesters before they defend them successfully.

Doctoral applicants are required to have two successive semesters in residence as full-time students as defined by the Graduate School.

Doctoral students are encouraged to engage in teaching and research as a condition for qualifying for a degree.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Guidelines have been developed by the graduate committee in sociology in order to guide students towards successful completion of their master’s and Ph.D. degrees.

Academic Scholarship: All course work must be completed in accordance with the regulations of the Graduate School (http://bulletins.wayne.edu/graduate/general-information/academic-regulations) and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (http://bulletins.wayne.edu/graduate/college-liberal-arts-sciences/academic-regulations).