Completing the Masters Program in 8 Easy Steps

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Recommended Timeline

*Masters students should use the following recommended outline in developing a program of study and timeline with their Advisor/Committee Chair.*

**First Year:**

**Fall Semester** –
1. Complete 7 required course credits and 3 elective course credits.
2. Complete a Program of Study; get signature of the Graduate Coordinator and turn in to the Graduate Secretary for submission to Graduate Studies.

**Winter Semester** –
1. Complete 7 required course credits and 3 elective course credits.
2. Begin work with your thesis committee chair to develop a thesis topic and prospectus.
3. By the end of the semester, develop timeline for completion of thesis project, including plans for securing an appropriate dataset or collecting data.
4. Submit prospectus drafts to thesis chair and committee members.

**Spring/Summer** –
1. Complete 3 elective credits or thesis credits as approved by committee chair.
2. Continue to work with thesis chair and committee to prepare for a defense during spring/summer or early fall semester, and to acquire appropriate data for thesis.

**Second Year:**

**Fall Semester** –
2. Complete remaining 3-6 elective credits as needed.
3. Continue thesis research; finalize data and analysis plans, and begin analysis.

**Winter Semester** –
1. Submit drafts of thesis chapters to chair for review and feedback; make revisions until your chair and committee members agree it meets thesis standards and requirements.
2. Plan thesis defense with committee chair for April or August.
3. Complete remaining thesis credits according to graduation plans (must enroll in 2 credits the semester of the thesis defense).
4. To meet requirements for an *April graduation*, a defense must be held by *early March*; for an *August graduation* a defense must be held by *early July*.
5. An approved thesis draft must be given to committee members and placed in the Sociology Department office at *least two weeks prior to the scheduled thesis defense date.*
Step 1: Creating a Program of Study

Important things to know:

- The Program of Study form is available online at www.byu.edu/gradstudies (under current student forms).
- Masters students should work with their preliminary advisors to complete and submit a program of study to the graduate secretary by the end of their first semester.
- The department expects masters degrees to be finished in 2 years (3 years in exceptional circumstances).
- Students typically take 10 credits (3 courses + 598R) each semester (Fall & Winter) during their first year for a total of 20 credits.
- Following the first two semesters, students take 15 additional credits, including 6 thesis credits to complete the MS degree. Thesis credits should be planned with your thesis committee chair; you must be enrolled in 2 thesis credits the semester you defend your thesis. (See recommended time-line.)
- Program of Study Change forms are available online at www.byu.edu/gradstudies.
  
  If you change your program of study, be sure to have a change form signed by your committee and turned in to the graduate secretary.

- A minimum of 6 credits a year is required to remain in the program.
- Rules regarding transfer credits: Classes must be clearly graduate level
  
  Student must have earned a B grade or better
  
  Credits cannot have applied to another degree/program
  
  Credits cannot total more than 10 hours

MS Degree:  35 credits required (29 of approved course work, 6 thesis hours)

First year of program (14 credits):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Winter Semester</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soc 598R</td>
<td>Soc 598R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc 600</td>
<td>Soc 605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc 610</td>
<td>Soc 604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second year of program: Take 15 additional hours of electives†.

†Electives may include 6 graduate credits outside of sociology. Proposals for including either undergraduate courses or additional courses outside of sociology must be approved by the graduate committee.

*For a more comprehensive reference of instructions and procedures, see the Graduate Program Handbook, available online at http://sociology.byu.edu/Assets/gradhandbook.pdf.
Step 2: Learning about a New Job

- Be sure to see Margaret and sign your contract before you start working.
- *Graduate assistantships are professional internships with explicit obligations. Assistantships are thus considered to be part-time jobs (20 hours a week unless otherwise specified). They are not fellowships. We expect you to work the full hours a week specified in your contract.*
- Stipends for Masters students: $6,300 for a semester assistantship working 20 hours a week. Continued funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance in both course work and RA/TA assignments each semester.
- Must be a registered student to be eligible for departmental employment.
- Spring/Summer employment: 20 hours in either spring or summer term or split 10/10 between the two terms.
- The department may cover up to two years of assistantship funding for Masters students.
- We do not have tuition waivers.

Step 3: Choosing a Committee

- During Fall semester of Year 1, your preliminary advisor will help you develop a thesis committee. The chair of that committee will become your permanent advisor.
- Steps:
  - Obtain the appropriate form from the department website: http://sociology.byu.edu/Pages/Graduate-Student-Forms.aspx
  - Choose a chair from within the department
  - Choose two other committee members (1 can be from another department)
- Committee list due to graduate secretary by end of the first semester in the program.
- *Change in Committee* forms are available online via the department website.
Step 4: Writing and Defending a Prospectus

- Present a draft thesis prospectus to your graduate committee no later than the end of the first full year in the program.
- Consult with your committee for guidelines and expectations.
- Print a scheduling form from the department website: http://sociology.byu.edu/Pages/Graduate-Student-Forms-.aspx.
- Schedule the prospectus defense at least 2 weeks before your defense; your thesis chair must approve the scheduling of a prospectus defense.
- The prospectus should outline the proposed topic, methods, theory, and procedures for the completion of the final project.

Suggested Components of a Thesis or Dissertation Prospectus

**Introduction** - Objectives (what you want to accomplish), procedures (how you are going to accomplish it), and relevance (why it’s important to accomplish).

**Statement of the Problem** - What is your research question? Why is your topic a problem worthy of study?

**Significance of Problem** - Locate your topic in the general area of knowledge. Is there a gap or need for more knowledge. Describe the contribution your research may make.

**Background to the Problem** - What have others said about the problem? What are the literatures related to your research question?

**Methods** - What are your questions, hypotheses, methodology, and connection between your introduction and background and how you are going to empirically collect and analyze the data to support it. Define and articulate concepts and their measures (as well as dependent, independent, and control variables) as appropriate, given the methods you have proposed.

**Time Table**

**Bibliography/References**
Step 5: Defending a Thesis

- You must be registered for two thesis credit hours the semester you defend.
- You will work closely with your committee as you write your thesis.
- Your committee chair (and other members) will decide when your thesis is ready for defense.
- Draft should be clean and edited before being presented to the graduate committee for consideration of an oral defense.
- Apply for graduation online in Route Y. Ecclesiastical Endorsement has to be current, otherwise the system will not allow you to submit application. (This will delay any scheduling of your oral defense).
- Scheduling form available online at www.byu.edu/gradstudies (ADV Form 8c).
- Must be scheduled through graduate secretary at least two weeks in advance.
- Be aware of deadlines for defending.
- Make sure your committee has adequate time to review the work before the defense (usually 2 weeks).
- Leave an unbound copy of your thesis with the graduate secretary to display for the department at least two weeks in advance.
- Defenses may not be scheduled between semesters (between the last day of finals and the first day of class).
- Possible outcomes of oral defense:
  - Pass
  - Pass with qualifications (revisions)
  - Recess - If two or more members vote to Recess, examination is adjourned. You may reschedule a second and final examination with the original committee no sooner than a month after the recessed examination.
  - Fail - If two or more examiners vote to Fail, your graduate degree program in sociology is terminated.

Step 6: Making Revisions

- Work closely with your committee as you put the final touches on your thesis.
- Be sure your committee chair informs the graduate secretary when you have completed your revisions.
- Be aware of the deadlines:
  
Step 7: Getting Ready for Electronic Submission of Thesis

General Things to Know:
- All theses are submitted electronically.
- The department no longer requires a hardbound copy of your thesis; however, the chair of your committee may require a copy. You will need to consult your thesis chair about his/her preference.
- The ETD website, http://etd.byu.edu, has detailed information on the electronic submission requirements and formatting guidelines.

Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs):
- We suggest that you use the ASA style guide to format your thesis for electronic submission.
- Upload your thesis to PDF format using Adobe Acrobat Professional. Computers with this software are available in the Harold B. Lee Library.
  - Follow the guidelines on ADV Form 11, found at http://www.byu.edu/gradstudies.
- Submit your final ETD for approval from the department and the Associate Dean, along with ADV Form 8d with your final signatures of your committee and graduate coordinator or department chair.
- Deliver your ADV Form 8d and title page to the Library Administration Office, 2060 HBLL, and pay any binding or mailing fees (when applicable) for validation. Then, deliver the validated ADV Form 8d to Graduate Studies, 105 FPH.

Step 8: Tying up Loose Ends

- Make sure your Program of Study has met all the requirements.
- All keys need to be returned to the Key Office, 285 BRWB.
- All necessary fees are paid to the university and department (i.e. copy bill).
- Update current or forwarding address or other information in Route Y.
Students applying for graduation after these deadlines will not be considered for graduation until the following semester. All graduation applications are submitted online.

*Note:* Individual departments may have deadlines earlier than those listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>Last day to apply for graduation online in AIM. Go to byu.edu → Route Y → School → Apply for Graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>Last day for departments to accept a student’s graduation application in AIM (GRADQ and ADV01).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>Last day to schedule a final oral examination (defense of dissertation, thesis, or selected project*) with department using the Department Scheduling of Final Oral Examination form (ADV Form 8c), and submit copies of your document to your graduate committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>Last day to have a final oral examination.* Note: Ample time should be allowed to make corrections in dissertations, theses, or selected projects after the final oral examination and before the deadline for submitting the ETD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 9</td>
<td>Last day to submit dissertation, thesis, or selected project with the Approval for Submission of Dissertation, Thesis, or Selected Project form (ADV Form 8d) to the college dean for signature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>Upon receipt of the signed ADV Form 8d, the ETD must be submitted for electronic format approvals through the ETD submission website (<a href="http://etd.byu.edu/">http://etd.byu.edu/</a>). After the department has approved the ETD, the dean’s office will review and approve the ETD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>This is the last day the student may take the ADV Form 8d to the Library Administration Office (2060 HBLL) once the ETD appears in the Library Administration Office ETD queue. The student then takes the validated ADV Form 8d to Graduate Studies (105 FPH). Also the last day to complete any remaining requirements for a degree including payment of fees, submitting grade changes (for I's, T's, etc.), prerequisite independent study courses, and for departments to enter examination results (oral or written) in AIM (ADV08).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None†</td>
<td>Graduation — University Commencement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None†</td>
<td>Graduation — College Convocations.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Selected project refers to project programs in the Departments of Biology, Communications, Instructional Psychology and Technology, Linguistics and English Language, Nursing, School of Technology, Statistics, and Visual Arts.

† All students in dissertation, thesis, or selected project programs must use ADV Form 8c to schedule the final oral examination at least two weeks before the exam. Final examinations may not be held during the “interim period” between semesters or terms.

§ December graduates are invited to participate in April graduation exercises. June graduates are invited to participate in August graduation exercises.