

# Sociology - Ph.D

## 2017 - 2018 Assessment Plan

Currently status is: Report Accepted

### I. ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016 - 2017

#### Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Sociology is to develop and promote superior understanding of sociological approaches to the study of humans and their groups. We are committed to achieving and maintaining excellence in all of our teaching, research and service endeavors. In graduate instruction, we seek to (1) to offer courses of the highest possible quality, emphasizing training in research methods and the acquisition of a broad understanding of sociological theory, (2) provide individualized mentoring, (3) help students develop the scholarly talents necessary for building a strong curriculum vitae, gaining employment in the profession, and subsequently having a successful career, and (4) maintain positive ties with students beyond their graduation. With respect to the PhD program the Graduate Director and the graduate committee meet frequently to assess that students are making timely progress in their work and to confirm adequate mentoring of students. The department works to insure students have opportunity and incentive to present papers at either regional or national conferences and many of them have multiple publications by the time they graduate. According to the National Research rankings our student S rankings are tied for third in the country reflecting the timeliness of graduation, publications by graduate students, etc.. We place about two thirds in academic positions and this is high for our profession which also attracts government employees. It appears the placement in tenure track academic positions has steadily increased in recent years. At the end of their training in the sociology department we anticipate that all students will be able to conduct research in at least one of the three primary research fields of faculty expertise (Stratification and Inequality, Population and Health, or Social Psychology), teach classes and be fine citizens in their respective positions.

#### Goal 1.

PhD students should understand major theories of the discipline and scientific research methods.

#### Curriculum

Annual assessment. Students successfully complete four courses in the areas of theory (SOCY 710 plus 3 additional theory courses) and four courses in the area of research methods (SOCY 730 plus 3 additional methods/statistics courses) in a timely fashion.

#### Learning Outcome 1.

Students will recognize and be knowledgeable of the major theories and theoretical approaches of the discipline.

#### Measures and Criteria

Success in this goal is indicated by a passing level of performance in required theory courses in a timely fashion. Success will be measured as at least 95 percent of students completing required theory courses within the minimum time frame given course offerings.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in specifically theoretical respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating theoretical performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

#### Methods

PhD students will complete an annual review of activities and submit this report to the Graduate Program Director. This annual report will be used for assessment of all learning outcomes. The Graduate Program

Director will prepare a summary of the annual reports for the Chair and will share results with the faculty during discussion of the graduate program.

Data from the annual review will be used to assess timely completion of required courses for this learning outcome.

Committees will be provided with instruction to judge assessment learning outcomes at from exams and dissertations as 'outstanding' according to criteria established by the graduate studies committee. The graduate director will evaluate research publications and products in this respect.

The assessment of theoretical knowledge and practice will be used in this learning outcome, measured as the percentage of combined outstanding acknowledgements from the combined number of research products, exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

### **Results**

100% of students completed the required theory courses on time. However, the combined percentage of comps, defenses and dissertations rated outstanding in theory declined to 40% from 80% last year.

### **Use of Results**

As anticipated, raising the requirements for outstanding performance to "professionally publishable" resulted in a drop in the percentage of products rated outstanding. Last year was, however, also an exceptionally high year in terms of product quality and the current percentage is higher than the target we had set for these more stringent standards. Results have been shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and the Chair. We will monitor the results with these new standards for another academic year and then revisit the question of whether to raise our objectives. In addition, the faculty has already proposed changes to the graduate program which may standardize the curricular theory content somewhat more in the future and thereby focus a more specific and attainable judgement of qualitative excellence in theory.

## **Learning Outcome 2.**

Students will demonstrate an understanding and ability to use advanced statistical tools, and a range of research methods including but not limited to advanced causal modeling techniques, survey research, experimental methods, qualitative methods.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by a passing level of performance in required methods and statistics courses in a timely fashion. Success will be measured by at least 95 percent of students completing required statistics and methods courses within the minimum time frame given course offerings.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in specifically methodological respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating methodological performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

### **Methods**

Data from the annual review submitted by graduate students will be used to assess course completion progress for this learning outcome.

The specific assessment of methodological knowledge and practice at the time of exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses will be used along with assessment of major professional products (e.g. research papers published) in this learning outcome, measured as the percentage of combined outstanding acknowledgements from the combined number of research products, exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

## **Results**

100 Percent of students passed required statistics courses on time. Only 30 Percent of comps, dissertations and defenses were rated as outstanding in knowledge and use of methods.

## **Use of Results**

As noted, raising the requirements for outstanding performance to "professionally publishable" was expected to result in a drop in the percentage of products rated outstanding. These results, nonetheless, improved on last year's result of 20 percent. Despite more rigorous standards, the current percentage meets the target we had set for these more stringent standards. Results have been shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and the Chair. We will monitor the results with these new standards for another academic year and then revisit the question of whether to raise our objectives. In addition, the faculty has already proposed changes to the graduate program which will increase the amount of required methodological courses and should raise the percent of final products which are outstanding in these terms.

## **Goal 2.**

To prepare students such that upon graduation with the PhD, they either have, or are beginning to, establish themselves with expertise in a specific area in the discipline.

## **Curriculum**

Annual assessment. Students should complete up to eighteen hours of elective course work which informs the student's specialty area and areas closely related to the specialty area and successfully prepare a bibliography for the student's specialty area examination done in consultation with the specialty area examining committee in a timely fashion.

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

PhD students should demonstrate a breadth and depth of knowledge in the student's specialty area.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by successful and timely completion of elective substantive coursework and measured by at least 95 percent of students successfully passing the student's specialty area examination within any contiguous three-year window.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in substantive area of specialization respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating substantive performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

#### **Methods**

Data from the annual review will be used to assess successful and timely completion of comprehensive exams for this learning outcome.

Portfolio data for the percentage of exams, prospectus and defense dissertations rated outstanding in substantive regards will be used to assess this learning outcome.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

## **Results**

100 Percent of students completed 18 hrs of substantive coursework and area exams on time. 40 Percent of comps, defenses and dissertations were rated as outstanding in substantive knowledge of the field.

## **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and Chair for discussion. Pending

revisions to the graduate program which have been approved by the faculty would also serve to increase the specificity of substantive course material for student interests and the range of substantive courses available to them. No further action was deemed necessary.

### **Goal 3.**

To have an established record of professional participation by the time the PhD is awarded.

#### **Curriculum**

Presentation of original research and scholarship at professional meetings.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will become familiar with aspects of the profession not covered in traditional coursework to prepare them for active professional involvement in the discipline.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by the level of presentation of PhD students in the aggregate. At least 75% of PhD students should participate in at least one presentation venue annually.

#### **Methods**

Annual reviews submitted by students will be used to assess this outcome, measured by the count of PhD students who present original research and scholarship in at least one professional venue annually, expressed as a percentage of the PhD student body exclusive of first year students.

#### **Results**

92 Percent of students had at least one professional presentation or publication in the past year. This is an increase from 71 percent in the prior year.

#### **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and Chair. No further action was deemed necessary. It should, however, be noted that limitations placed upon the graduate school's travel program has impacted student's ability to present at professional conferences.

### **Goal 4.**

PhD students should develop research skills sufficient for dissertation level research prior to the defense of the dissertation proposal.

#### **Curriculum**

Annual assessment in the years prior to dissertation proposal defense.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students should develop research skills through regular contact hours of research mentorship and collaborative research experience in the years prior to defense of their dissertation proposal.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Success will be indicated by at least 90 percent of students having at least monthly research mentorship contact and ongoing research experiences outside classroom hours during any given year of study prior to defense of the dissertation.

#### **Methods**

Data from the annual review submitted by students will be used to assess the annual contact hours of research mentorship and research experience in the years prior to the dissertation. The measurement used to assess this learning outcome will be computed as the percentage of students beyond the first year and prior to dissertation defense who report having at least monthly research mentoring by faculty and/or direct collaborative research experience with faculty.

#### **Results**

100 Percent had monthly research contact with faculty during the past year (excluding 5 ABD and part time students out of contact for some time).

#### **Use of Results**

As expected, the new mentorship and student tracking program improved this result over the past year's high of 93%. Only a student who did not comply with the required beginning and end of semester research planning/contract process would likely fail to meet this standard. Results were shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and Chair. No further action was deemed necessary.

## Goal 5.

PhD students should develop professional teaching skills prior to completion of the PhD.

### Curriculum

Annual assessment throughout the course of study.

#### Learning Outcome 1.

Students should have direct teaching mentorship as a course assistant or class instructor in the years leading to their PhD degree completion.

#### Measures and Criteria

Success will be indicated by 90 percent of students having received mentorship while assisting or teaching in at least four courses prior to completion of their PhD degree.

#### Methods

The annual review submitted by graduate students will be used to assess this learning outcome. The outcome is a cumulative measure over years leading to the PhD and will be assessed by (1) the percentage of students who appear on a trajectory to complete this experience prior to completion of the degree and (2) the percentage of those completing the degree who have accumulated the required level of teaching mentorship and experience.

#### Results

100 Percent of students are on track to teach under mentorship prior to the completion of their PhD degree. All but one student (early in the program) has already met this criteria.

#### Use of Results

Faculty have already proposed a program revision which would include, among other changes, an additional proseminar that would provide presentations by faculty and visiting speakers on issues related to teaching. In addition the department has reinstated the offering of SOCY 780 "Teaching Sociology" in the coming year to further address teaching mentorship for our graduate students. Results were shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and Chair for discussion. No further actions were deemed necessary.

## Goal 6.

Successful completion of the PhD degree in a timely fashion and professional placement.

### Curriculum

Courses required for the PhD, and preparation of the PhD dissertation with dissertation director guidance.

#### Learning Outcome 1.

Students will have depth and breadth in the discipline (depth contingent on their specialty area) and the necessary research skills to bring a research project to fruition.

#### Measures and Criteria

Success in this Learning Outcome is indicated by the mean time to degree for PhD students who successfully complete PhD requirements, including the final dissertation defense. At least 75% of students should complete the PhD requirements within 8 years of the beginning from the BA or BS degree or within 5 years from the MA or MS degree. The number of students leaving the program after excessive mean time to degree will be reported if any.

#### Methods

The annual review collected from PhD students will be used to assess this outcome, verified through administrative data, as the count of students successfully completing the PhD within the time frames stipulated above, expressed as a percent.

The data on time to degree completion will be presented to the graduate studies committee, GPD and Chair for a discussion of graduate curricula and the graduate program as well as detailed review of individual students in jeopardy.

#### Results

Three students completed their time to degree this year with an average time to degree of 7.33 years since BA or BS degree. This result continues improvement from 8.3 years last year and 8.5 years in the prior year. No students have left the program without their degree this year although there continue to be five

ABD students with little program contact on the books.

#### **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and Chair. We expect program revisions to continue the positive trend over recent years. The backlog of ABD students who have little contact predate the both current Chair and GPD. We will continue efforts to resolve these old outstanding cases despite their historical nature. They are not reflective of the department's current procedures or student progress within the department. No further action was deemed necessary.

#### **Learning Outcome 2.**

Students will have knowledge of the job market for Sociologists and interviewing skills.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this Learning Outcome is indicated by students garnering interviews and/or garnering placements in academic or non-academic positions within 18 months of degree completion.

#### **Methods**

The annual review submitted by PhD students will be used to compute the percent of students garnering interviews and the percent gaining offers of employment within 18 months of graduation.

#### **Results**

67 Percent (2) of graduating students secured academic employment interviews. 33 Percent (1) graduated into an already guaranteed academic position. Of the two interviewing one has already secured a prestigious position, the other is still on the market because of geographic limitations in spousal employment.

#### **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the GPD, Graduate Studies Committee and Chair. No further action was deemed necessary.

## **II. FUTURE ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2017 - 2018**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Sociology is to develop and promote superior understanding of sociological approaches to the study of humans and their groups. We are committed to achieving and maintaining excellence in all of our teaching, research and service endeavors. In graduate instruction, we seek to (1) to offer courses of the highest possible quality, emphasizing training in research methods and the acquisition of a broad understanding of sociological theory, (2) provide individualized mentoring, (3) help students develop the scholarly talents necessary for building a strong curriculum vitae, gaining employment in the profession, and subsequently having a successful career, and (4) maintain positive ties with students beyond their graduation. With respect to the PhD program the Graduate Director and the graduate committee meet frequently to assess that students are making timely progress in their work and to confirm adequate mentoring of students. The department works to insure students have opportunity and incentive to present papers at either regional or national conferences and many of them have multiple publications by the time they graduate. According to the National Research rankings our student S rankings are tied for third in the country reflecting the timeliness of graduation, publications by graduate students, etc.. We place about two thirds in academic positions and this is high for our profession which also attracts government employees. It appears the placement in tenure track academic positions has steadily increased in recent years. At the end of their training in the sociology department we anticipate that all students will be able to conduct research in at least one of the three primary research fields of faculty expertise (Stratification and Inequality, Population and Health, or Social Psychology), teach classes and be fine citizens in their respective positions.

### **Goal 1.**

PhD students should understand major theories of the discipline and scientific research methods.

### **Curriculum**

Annual assessment. Students successfully complete four courses in the areas of theory (SOCY 710 plus 3 additional theory courses) and four courses in the area of research methods (SOCY 730 plus 3 additional methods/statistics courses) in a timely fashion.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will recognize and be knowledgeable of the major theories and theoretical approaches of the discipline.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by a passing level of performance in required theory courses in a timely fashion. Success will be measured as at least 95 percent of students completing required theory courses within the minimum time frame given course offerings.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in specifically theoretical respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating theoretical performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

### **Methods**

PhD students will complete an annual review of activities and submit this report to the Graduate Program Director. This annual report will be used for assessment of all learning outcomes. The Graduate Program Director will prepare a summary of the annual reports for the Chair and will share results with the faculty during discussion of the graduate program.

Data from the annual review will be used to assess timely completion of required courses for this learning outcome.

Committees will be provided with instruction to judge assessment learning outcomes at from exams and dissertations as 'outstanding' according to criteria established by the graduate studies committee. The graduate director will evaluate research publications and products in this respect.

The assessment of theoretical knowledge and practice will be used in this learning outcome, measured as the percentage of combined outstanding acknowledgements from the combined number of research products, exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

## **Learning Outcome 2.**

Students will demonstrate an understanding and ability to use advanced statistical tools, and a range of research methods including but not limited to advanced causal modeling techniques, survey research, experimental methods, qualitative methods.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by a passing level of performance in required methods and statistics courses in a timely fashion. Success will be measured by at least 95 percent of students completing required statistics and methods courses within the minimum time frame given course offerings.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in specifically methodological respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating methodological performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

### **Methods**

Data from the annual review submitted by graduate students will be used to assess course completion progress for this learning outcome.

The specific assessment of methodological knowledge and practice at the time of exams, prospectus and

dissertation defenses will be used along with assessment of major professional products (e.g. research papers published) in this learning outcome, measured as the percentage of combined outstanding acknowledgements from the combined number of research products, exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

## **Goal 2.**

Upon graduation with the PhD, students should have developed expertise in a specific field in the discipline of Sociology.

### **Curriculum**

Annual assessment. Students should complete up to eighteen hours of elective course work which informs the student's specialty area and areas closely related to the specialty area in consultation with their examining committee.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

PhD students should demonstrate a breadth and depth of knowledge in the student's specialty area.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by successful and timely completion of elective substantive coursework and measured by at least 95 percent of students successfully preparing a committee approved bibliography for their specialty area examination and completing their specialty exam successfully within any contiguous three-year window.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the percentage of dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in substantive area of specialization respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating substantive performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

#### **Methods**

Data from the annual review will be used to assess successful and timely completion of comprehensive exams for this learning outcome.

Portfolio data for the percentage of exams, prospectus and defense dissertations rated outstanding in substantive regards will be used to assess this learning outcome.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

## **Goal 3.**

To have an established record of acceptance and professional research presentation by the time the PhD is awarded.

### **Curriculum**

Presentation of original research and scholarship at professional meetings and presentations through SOCY 799, 899 and department proseminars.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will become familiar with aspects of the profession not covered in traditional coursework to prepare them for active professional involvement in the discipline.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by the level of presentation of PhD students in the aggregate. At least 75% of PhD students should participate in at least one presentation venue annually.

## **Methods**

Annual reviews submitted by students will be used to assess this outcome, measured by the count of PhD students who present original research and scholarship in at least one professional venue annually, expressed as a percentage of the PhD student body exclusive of first year students.

## **Goal 4.**

PhD students should develop research skills sufficient for dissertation level research prior to the defense of the dissertation proposal.

## **Curriculum**

Annual assessment in mentored research meetings with assigned mentors in the years prior to dissertation proposal defense.

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students should develop research skills through regular contact hours of research mentorship and collaborative research experience in the years prior to defense of their dissertation proposal.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success will be indicated by at least 90 percent of students having at least monthly research mentorship contact and ongoing research experiences outside classroom hours during any given year of study prior to defense of the dissertation, as indicated on annual review reports and validated by assigned mentors.

### **Methods**

Data from the annual review submitted by students will be used to assess the annual contact hours of research mentorship and research experience in the years prior to the dissertation. The measurement used to assess this learning outcome will be computed as the percentage of students beyond the first year and prior to dissertation defense who report having at least monthly research mentoring by faculty and/or direct collaborative research experience with faculty.

## **Goal 5.**

PhD students should develop professional teaching skills prior to completion of the PhD.

## **Curriculum**

Completion of Graduate School GTA training, mentored experience as GIA, experience as GTA, and annual assessment and feedback on course evaluations throughout the course of study.

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students should have direct teaching mentorship as a course assistant or class instructor in the years leading to their PhD degree completion.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success will be indicated by 90 percent of students having received mentorship while assisting or teaching in at least four courses prior to completion of their PhD degree.

### **Methods**

The annual review submitted by graduate students will be used to assess this learning outcome. The outcome is a cumulative measure over years leading to the PhD and will be assessed by (1) the percentage of students who appear on a trajectory to complete this experience prior to completion of the degree and (2) the percentage of those competing the degree who have accumulated the required level of teaching mentorship and experience.