

M.S. in Social Science



Graduate Student Handbook 2026-2027



Department of
**SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



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WELCOME

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice at Clemson University is a multidisciplinary academic community committed to the critical study of human behavior in its social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Our faculty are dedicated to advancing scholarship that not only deepens our understanding of the world but also contributes meaningfully to the improvement of individual and collective well-being.

We are guided by a strong commitment to excellence and are proud to uphold the department's motto: *"Doing Well by Doing Good."* This principle shapes our engagement in research, teaching, advising, mentoring, community outreach, and advocacy. Our work is informed by both macro- and micro-level explorations of everyday social life, allowing us to examine the structural factors that exacerbate inequities, while also paying careful attention to interactions that take place on a daily basis.

As a department, we recognize the complexity and urgency of the social challenges facing our society. Yet, we remain resolute in our efforts to generate knowledge, foster dialogue, and promote transformative change. We are committed to creating an academic environment in which all members—students, faculty, and staff—feel welcome, valued, and empowered to thrive.

We encourage you to engage fully in the intellectual life of the department and to contribute your unique perspectives to our shared pursuit of knowledge and equity. Welcome to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice!

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to familiarize students with the policies, procedures, and expectations of the M.S. in Social Science program at Clemson University. It outlines key information regarding program eligibility, degree requirements, and departmental policies as established by the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice.

The contents of this handbook are subject to continuous revision. Thus, students should consult the most recent edition of the *M.S. in Social Science Graduate Student Handbook*. This handbook is intended to supplement the policies outlined in the *Graduate School Policies and Procedures Handbook*, which establishes the minimum academic and administrative standards for all graduate programs at Clemson University. Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to all applicable policies and procedures set forth by Clemson University, the Graduate School, and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice.

Generally, students are governed by the policies in effect at the time of their initial enrollment in the graduate program. However, minor policy changes that do not impede a student's progress toward degree completion may be implemented immediately, particularly when such changes are deemed to be in the best interest of students and/or the University, or when required by legislative or regulatory bodies. All policy updates, whether minor or substantive, will be documented in the "*Changes to Graduate School Policy, Annotated*" section of the Graduate School Policy Handbook and summarized in a table on the Graduate School Policies & Procedures webpage.

For additional guidance regarding departmental and university-wide policies, students are encouraged to consult the Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Rhys Hester.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The current version of the Graduate School Policies and Procedures Handbook can be found here: <https://www.clemson.edu/graduate/academics/policies-and-procedures.html>

Refer to the online Clemson Academic Calendar for registration deadlines, key semester dates, and holiday schedules: <https://www.clemson.edu/registrar/academic-resources/academic-calendars.html>

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice offers the Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Social Science, with an emphasis on both practical and theoretical knowledge in the areas of social science research methods and theory. The program is designed to equip students with strong competencies in research design, data analysis, theoretical application, and practical field experience. During the second year of study, students may choose between the thesis and non-thesis tracks, depending on their academic interests and professional goals.

Department faculty hail from the academic traditions of sociology, anthropology, and criminal justice. United by a commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service, faculty members are dedicated to fostering both the academic and professional development of students. This commitment is grounded in the shared belief that expertise is cultivated throughout one's career and is continually enriched through ongoing learning and engagement.

The M.S. in Social Science program is committed to fostering learning beyond the traditional academic setting. Students are encouraged to attend and present at academic conferences, participate in internships, and collaborate on research projects through the Center for Public Safety Research. The program recognizes the critical role of professional development in achieving future career goals and strongly urges students to actively participate in national, state, and regional academic and professional associations as a means of building valuable network connections.

Admissions Policies

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice is committed to recruiting and enrolling a diverse, academically talented, and well-rounded cohort of students for the M.S. in Social Science program. Admission decisions are made by the Graduate Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the Graduate Coordinator.

Applicants must meet all admission requirements established by both the Graduate School and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice to be considered for admission. These requirements are reviewed annually by the Graduate Advisory Committee to ensure alignment with academic standards set by the Graduate School.

Holistic Review: The Graduate Advisory Committee is committed to holistic application review of all candidates for admission to the M.S. in Social Science program. Each element of the candidate's application is considered cohesively to determine if the student has a high potential for success in the Social Science program.

Required Application Materials:

- A Bachelor's degree from an accredited degree program
 - Completion of a minimum of 15 undergraduate credit hours in social science coursework. If the applicant does not meet this requirement, they may be required to take supplemental courses.

- A grade point average of at least 3.0
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores on the verbal, quantitative, and analytical sections
- Three letters of recommendation, ideally from academic recommenders. If the applicant graduated more than ten years prior, letters from employers may be submitted in lieu of letters from former faculty members.
- A resume or curriculum vitae (CV)
- A 500-word personal statement detailing the applicant's career aspirations, indicating how completion of the Master's in Social Science program will assist in achieving these goals.
- International Applicants ONLY: Submission of TOEFL, IELTS, Duolingo, or PTE scores is required for applicants whose native language is not English. Scores that are over two years old will not be accepted.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding application materials, a detailed description about the preparation of such materials can be found on the Graduate School's website linked above.

ENROLLMENT POLICIES

Matriculation Timeline:

Students are generally expected to matriculate into the M.S. in Social Science program during the fall semester. However, limited exceptions may be made for current Clemson University employees or self-funded students. Students interested in matriculating during the spring or summer semesters should contact the Graduate Coordinator to discuss available enrollment options.

Summer enrollment of at least one credit is required for students with an August graduation date. However, students who have completed their degree requirements, including the thesis defense, prior to the first day of summer classes need not take a credit during the summer to graduate in August.

Length of Program:

The M.S. in Social Science program is designed to be completed in approximately two years of full-time study. Full-time graduate status is defined as enrollment in a minimum of nine (9) credit hours per semester. Prior to the beginning of the second year, students must select an experiential learning track, choosing either the thesis option or the non-thesis option.

Students pursuing the thesis track are required to complete a minimum of 36 credit hours of coursework, which includes the successful completion of a thesis project. Students who choose the non-thesis track must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of coursework, supplemented by an applied research project or internship experience.

Course Modality:

Although some elective courses may be offered in an online or web-based format, the majority of M.S. in Social Science courses require in-person attendance. Therefore, students must be able to attend classes on Clemson University's main campus for the duration of their enrollment in the program. Students are expected to attend all lectures or otherwise adhere to the normal attendance policy for each course.

Continuous Enrollment:

Students admitted to the M.S. in Social Science program are generally expected to remain full-time students for the duration of their time in the program. As part of this expectation, students are expected to maintain a full-time course load of at least 9 credit hours per semester, as well as actively participate in department events. However, should a student need to take leave from the program, they are no longer required to submit formal documentation, per Graduate School guidelines. However, the student should consult the Graduate Coordinator and inform them of their decision to take leave as soon as possible.

Following a period of non-enrollment, a student's account will be rendered inactive, and they will be unable to register for courses. To resume studies, the student must submit the [Graduate Request for Re-Entrance Form](#). Readmission is contingent upon a positive recommendation from the Graduate Coordinator and final approval by the Graduate School. Please note that readmission is not guaranteed. Additionally, in accordance with Graduate School policy, the master's degree must be completed within six years from the student's initial enrollment date.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Graduate coursework completed at another institution, within a different department at Clemson University, or prior to admission into the M.S. in Social Science program must undergo formal evaluation for transfer eligibility. All transfer credit requests require final approval from the Graduate Coordinator, the Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Approval for courses taken at other institutions must be obtained prior to enrollment in those courses.

To be eligible for transfer, coursework must have been completed at a regionally accredited institution and must be verified through the submission of an official transcript. Only courses in which a grade of "B" or higher was earned will be considered, and courses taken on a pass/fail basis are not eligible for transfer credit. Additionally, transfer credit will not be granted for research projects, internships, or master's thesis work completed at another institution.

A maximum of 12 credit hours may be transferred, provided this does not exceed one-third of the graded course credits required for the degree. If approved, transfer credit will not be calculated into the student's Clemson University GPA.

Procedures for Student:

Students must begin the transfer process by discussing their proposed coursework with their

major advisor and/or advisory committee. The advisory committee, in accordance with Graduate School guidelines, will determine which courses may be considered for transfer. Approved courses must be included on the *GS2 Plan of Study*. Once the coursework has been completed, the student must request that an official transcript be sent directly from the credit-granting institution to the Graduate Admissions Office at gstranscripts@clermson.edu. Enrolled Student Services will verify that all Graduate School requirements have been met before any credit can be applied toward the degree. The Office of Enrolled Student Services and the Graduate School hold final authority over the approval or denial of all transfer credit requests.

CORE REQUIREMENTS FOR DEGREE

Each student pursuing the M.S. in Social Science degree is required to adhere to an established curriculum. Students are encouraged to collaborate closely with the Graduate Coordinator to develop an academic plan that aligns with their professional goals while fulfilling the requirements of the graduate program. The M.S. in Social Science curriculum mandates a minimum of 36 credit hours for the thesis option and at least 30 credit hours for the non-thesis option.

Both program tracks include 15 credit hours of required core courses (outlined below), a 3-credit hour methods elective, and 9 hours of content area electives. Recommended courses for the methods elective could include SSCI 8030 Survey Designs for Applied Social Research or SSCI 8050 Evaluation Research, but may also include methods courses taken outside of the department. Content area electives should focus on building students' knowledge of substantive content in sociology, anthropology, and/or criminal justice and include a number of 6000 and 8000-level electives offered by the department. Thesis students will take 9 hours of thesis research credits and non-thesis students will take additional electives to fill the remaining credit hours required for the degree.

Required Core Courses (15 hours):

- SSCI 8010 Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences I¹
- SSCI 8060 Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences
- SSCI 8070 Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences II
- SSCI 8100 Theoretical Models in Applied Social Research
- SSCI 8970 Departmental Research and Professional Development Seminar

Methods Elective (3 hours)

Content Area Electives (9 hours)

Master's Thesis Research (9 hours; Thesis Track) OR Additional electives (3 hours; Non-Thesis Track)

¹ POSC 8410 Public Data Analysis may be substituted for SSCI 8010 for some cohorts.

Total Hours: 36 hours (Thesis); 30 hours (Non-Thesis)

Only courses numbered 6000 and above are eligible for graduate credit. Graduate students are generally prohibited from enrolling in undergraduate courses unless it is necessary to complete a prerequisite course or to improve a previously earned low grade through remedial study. Supplementary instruction may be necessary when a student's undergraduate degree is vastly different than the degree program in which the student is currently enrolled. Any exceptions or course substitutions require the explicit approval of the Graduate Coordinator.

BACHELOR-TO-GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice is proud to offer a Bachelor-to-Graduate program for eligible undergraduate students seeking to expedite the completion of the M.S. in Social Science degree. This accelerated track allows exceptional students to enroll in graduate-level coursework while completing the final year of their undergraduate program. Graduate credits earned through this pathway may be applied toward both the undergraduate and graduate degree requirements.

To be eligible for the program, students must have earned a minimum of 90 credit hours toward their undergraduate degree and maintained a cumulative GPA of at least 3.4. Students need not be enrolled in a department undergraduate program (sociology, anthropology, criminal justice) to enroll in the 4+1 in Social Science program. Upon acceptance into the Bachelor-to-Graduate program, students may earn up to 12 credit hours of graduate-level coursework prior to the conferral of their bachelor's degree.

Students interested in pursuing the Bachelor-to-Graduate program must consult both their undergraduate academic advisor and the Graduate Coordinator for the M.S. in Social Science program. The academic advisor will assess whether the student has space in their undergraduate schedule to accommodate graduate coursework, while the Graduate Coordinator will provide detailed information about the program requirements. Approval from both parties is required for participation in the Bachelor-to-Graduate track.

The [GS6 Application](#) must be completed and signed by the student, the Graduate Coordinator, and the student's academic advisor before it can receive final approval by the Graduate School. Once approved, the student will be automatically enrolled in the designated graduate-level courses and will not need to complete the standard registration process. Additionally, students on this track are not required to submit a formal application to the M.S. in Social Science program, nor are they subject to the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) requirement or associated application fees.

Students enrolled in the Bachelor-to-Graduate program are not eligible for graduate assistantships until they have completed their undergraduate degree. Upon conferral of the bachelor's degree, students will be considered for assistantships alongside other qualified graduate applicants. Please note that assistantships are competitive and not guaranteed.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TRACKS OVERVIEW

The designation of an experiential learning track represents a critical step in fulfilling the requirements of the M.S. in Social Science program. This “choose your own journey” phase marks a shift from the program’s earlier focus on methods coursework to a more intensive period of independent study and applied learning.

Students may pursue one of two available tracks: the thesis track or the non-thesis track. Regardless of which track is selected, each student must choose an advisory chair and, if necessary, two additional faculty members to form a complete advisory committee. Specific guidelines regarding committee composition are outlined in the following sections of this handbook.

In consultation with their advisory committee, students are expected to submit their track designation by the end of the second semester in the program.

THESIS TRACK

The thesis serves as a demonstration of the student’s ability to plan, organize, conduct, and present original scholarly research. Each thesis must independently fulfill this objective, reflecting the student’s intellectual maturity, research competence, and academic autonomy. The completed thesis should represent a meaningful contribution to the field of social science.

Students are responsible for working closely with their advisory committee to determine the scope, direction, and content of their research. All phases of the thesis process (identifying the research topic, developing the proposal, designing the study, collecting and analyzing data, and writing the final document) are primarily the responsibility of the student, under the supervision of the advisory chair and committee members.

Throughout the process, students are expected to maintain consistent communication with their advisory committee and seek feedback at each stage. Additionally, students must ensure that the final thesis complies with the formatting and submission requirements of the Graduate School. All graduate students are required to attend a Graduate School workshop on thesis formatting in preparation for final submission.

Students following the thesis track must complete a total of 36 credit hours to earn the M.S. in Social Science degree. The thesis process, from initial planning through final defense, typically spans two semesters, most often the fall and spring terms preceding a May graduation date.

Students are expected to defend their thesis proposal by the end of the first semester of their second year. The final thesis defense should then be completed by the end of the second semester, generally a little more than one month before the scheduled May graduation date.

To ensure adequate review, the thesis proposal must be submitted in writing to all advisory committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled proposal defense. Similarly, the

final thesis must be submitted in its complete written form to the committee at least two weeks before the final defense is scheduled to take place.

NON-THESIS TRACK

In addition to the thesis track, students pursuing the M.S. in Social Science degree may opt for a practical experience track. This option allows students to apply their knowledge of social science research methods in real-world settings through the development of a personalized project that aligns with their professional goals. Common experiences within this track include an internship or teaching practicum in the student's area of interest.

All non-thesis track students must submit a final capstone deliverable that reflects a level of complexity and academic rigor comparable to that of the thesis to their faculty advisor.

While the parameters for capstone projects are intentionally broad to encourage individualization, students are encouraged to consult example syllabi available on the Social Science CANVAS page for guidance in developing a project tailored to their career aspirations.

Students on the non-thesis track must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of coursework to earn the M.S. in Social Science degree. If a student does not successfully fulfill the requirements outlined in their individualized non-thesis syllabus, they will be permitted to re-enroll for an additional semester. In such cases, the student must revise their *GS2 Plan of Study* Form accordingly and resubmit it to the Graduate School.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

During the first year of study, the Graduate Coordinator will serve as each student's primary academic advisor. The coordinator will assist with course planning, provide general guidance on program requirements, and help students begin considering whether they will pursue the thesis or non-thesis track.

At the beginning of the second year, students must select a faculty advisor who will serve as their advisory chair. This advisor will guide the student through their chosen experiential learning track and become the primary point of contact for all matters related to this project. Students on the non-thesis track are only required to appoint an advisory chair. Students on the thesis track must form a three-member advisory committee, which includes the primary advisor and two additional faculty members. The advisory committee is responsible for approving the student's curriculum, supervising progress within the chosen track, and ultimately recommending the student for the award of the M.S. in Social Science degree.

Once an advisory chair is selected, the Graduate Coordinator will continue to provide oversight on broader programmatic and institutional matters. This includes managing assistantship assignments, monitoring progress toward degree completion, and approving final course selections. The coordinator also remains available for general support and consultation throughout the remainder of the student's time in the program.

All members of a student's advisory committee must hold graduate faculty status, which is granted at one of three levels: teaching, advising, or directing. The advisory chair must hold the highest designation—graduate directing status. The majority of the committee, including the chair, must be composed of full-time Clemson University regular or administrative faculty, as defined in the [Faculty Manual](#). The chair must also be a faculty member within the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, although additional committee members may be selected from other departments across the university.

The full advisory committee must be selected and formally approved no later than the beginning of the third semester, which is typically the fall of the second year. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the Graduate Coordinator to confirm the graduate faculty status of each proposed committee member. Once the committee has been finalized, students must submit the *GS2 Committee Selection Form* through the Graduate School for official approval.

THESIS OVERVIEW

Thesis Credit:

Students are encouraged to enroll in three credit hours of SSCI 8910 Master's Thesis Research during the fall semester of their second year and six credit hours of SSCI 8910 Master's Thesis Research, for a total of nine credit hours. During this time, students are expected to demonstrate satisfactory progress toward the completion of the thesis to remain in good standing within the M.S. in Social Science program. Failure to maintain adequate progress may result in academic probation or dismissal from the program at any time, based on the recommendation of the student's advisory chair, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Department Chair.

Thesis Timing:

Students are expected to begin their thesis work, which includes the development, submission, and formal presentation of an approved written proposal, by the end of the first semester of their second year in the program. However, preliminary planning for the thesis should commence during the first year of study, with the selection of an advisory chair and the formation of the complete advisory committee finalized by the midpoint of the second semester.

Topic Selection:

Students may pursue a thesis research topic within any area of the social sciences, subject to approval by their advisory committee. It is strongly recommended that students consult prospective advisory committee members regarding the proposed topic prior to seeking formal approval.

Thesis Proposal:

All students pursuing the thesis track are required to prepare a formal thesis proposal. This proposal must be completed and successfully defended prior to the commencement of any formal research activities. The thesis proposal defense should occur no later than one semester before the defense of the final thesis, except in rare and exceptional circumstances. Under no circumstances shall the thesis proposal defense take place fewer than two months prior to the final thesis defense. Students are expected to comply with all proposal guidelines established by the Graduate School.

The thesis proposal will be prepared by the student under the guidance of the advisory chair. The proposal will include a detailed statement of the research to be conducted by the student. All proposals must include the following elements:

- A clear definition of the research problem/question;
- A review of the appropriate literature;
- A description of the research design;
- Proposed methods for processing and analyzing the data (quantitative and/or qualitative) for the particular problem under study with justifications for using these methods; and

- A description of the anticipated results indicating how these or alternative findings will be interpreted.

Students are required to consult regularly with their advisory committee chair throughout the development of the thesis proposal. It is the student's responsibility to schedule meetings with the chair and to establish a clear timeline for the various stages of proposal preparation.

Each iteration of the proposal must be submitted to the chair with a minimum of two weeks allotted for review. The chair will determine when each draft is sufficiently developed for submission and review. Following the chair's approval, the student must distribute the final written proposal to all members of the advisory committee no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled proposal defense meeting. Additionally, a copy of the proposal must also be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. During this review period, committee members may offer feedback or recommended revisions.

Proposal Defense:

The Graduate Coordinator and all committee members must be notified of the defense date at least ten working days in advance. An email notification is sufficient, provided that confirmation of receipt is received from each recipient. The student will then formally present the thesis proposal at a scheduled meeting of the full advisory committee. The proposal defense should be open to other interested parties as well. If any committee member is unable to attend, the Graduate Coordinator must be informed promptly. Every effort should be made to ensure full committee attendance at the proposal defense.

Voting to accept or reject the thesis proposal is limited to the members of the advisory committee. The committee can vote to:

- Accept the proposal as presented by the student;
- Accept the proposal contingent on minor changes stipulated by the committee (and approved by the chair) without holding another committee meeting;
- Require extensive revisions in the proposal stipulated by the committee and reschedule another committee meeting at which the revised proposal will be defended; or
- Reject the proposal and require the student to prepare a new proposal.

If the advisory committee rejects the thesis proposal, the student may opt to designate a new chair, committee members, and/or revise the research topic. Decisions regarding the acceptance of the thesis proposal must be unanimous. Upon the successful defense and approval of the research proposal, all advisory committee members will sign the *GS Approval of Thesis/Dissertation Research Proposal* form. No significant changes to the proposal (i.e., theoretical or methodological) may be made thereafter without the approval of the entire advisory committee.

Conduct of the Research:

Students should expect to begin their thesis research no later than the end of their third semester in the program. Thesis research may not begin until:

- The thesis proposal has been approved by the advisory committee, and
- The research protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB), if applicable.

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice does not provide compensation for expenses incurred during the conduct of research. Reimbursement for research-related costs will only be considered if prior written approval has been obtained. It is the responsibility of each student to acquaint themselves with all applicable departmental policies, procedures, and the professional and ethical standards governing thesis research.

Final Thesis Manuscript Review:

Students are expected to collaborate with their committee chair to ensure that a complete and error-free draft of the final thesis is submitted to all committee members. Committee members will be allowed up to three weeks to complete their initial review of the submitted draft. Failure to provide an initial review within six weeks may result in the removal of the committee member from the thesis committee, including, if necessary, the chair.

The student is responsible for revising the thesis draft in accordance with feedback provided by the advisory committee to ensure that it meets the necessary academic standards. Once the committee chair has granted final approval, the student must submit the completed thesis to all remaining committee members no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled thesis defense. As with the proposal, students should not expect faculty to review multiple drafts of the final thesis. Accordingly, the version submitted for the oral defense must be a polished, final draft, containing minimal, if any, errors. A digital copy of the final thesis must be provided to each committee member, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Department Chair, unless a printed copy is specifically requested. In addition, students are required to submit an official defense notification through the Graduate School website in advance of the proposed defense date.

Thesis Defense:

The student is required to participate in a final oral examination, during which they will formally defend their thesis before the full advisory committee. This defense is conducted in a meeting open to all faculty members. Graduation eligibility is contingent upon the successful completion of the final thesis defense no less than three weeks before the proposed graduation date. Members of the faculty, the Graduate Advisory Committee, and the Dean of the Graduate School are invited to attend the defense.

The student must ensure that written notification of the thesis defense is submitted in a timely fashion. An official notification of defense may be submitted using the [Thesis Defense Form](#) provided by the Graduate School.

Check the [Graduate School Deadlines](#) for additional information on thesis defense deadlines.

Following the thesis defense, the committee will vote to:

- Accept the thesis without modification;
- Accept the thesis contingent on minor revisions stipulated by the committee and to be approved by the thesis committee chair without holding another committee meeting; or
- Reject the thesis until specified major revisions are made. In this case, a second defense date must be scheduled.

Decisions regarding the thesis are made by a majority vote of the advisory committee. Upon successful completion of the thesis defense, each committee member must sign the [GS7M \(Final Exam and Thesis Approval Form\)](#). Once the form has been completed and signed by the committee chair, all committee members, and any other individuals as required, the chair is responsible for submitting the *GS7M* electronically ***within three days*** of the defense date.

A student who fails the initial defense may be allowed a second opportunity to defend the thesis upon the recommendation of the advisory committee. Failure to pass the second defense will result in dismissal from the M.S. in Social Science program at Clemson University.

Submission of Final Thesis:

The Graduate School utilizes an electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) publishing system. All manuscripts submitted through this system are subject to review by iThenticate, an anti-plagiarism tool. Additional information about the submission and publishing process can be found on the Graduate School website. There are no fees associated with uploading or publishing the final thesis online. Once published, the thesis will be accessible in the online database approximately six weeks after graduation.

Graduate students are responsible for reviewing and adhering to the Graduate School's regulations and guidelines, which are available on its website. For specific deadlines and additional submission requirements, refer to Appendix C.

NON-THESIS OVERVIEW

Overview:

A non-thesis option that satisfies degree requirements is available for students in the M.S. in Social Science program. The non-thesis option is designed to provide a meaningful, intentional, and highly individualized educational experience outside of the traditional thesis model. Under this approach, students are encouraged to pursue an internship, teaching practicum experience, or other substantial project that caters to the student's career interests. Unlike the thesis track, students need only appoint an advisory chair, rather than a full committee. All non-thesis students must complete a final capstone assignment that summarizes the social science work completed in their internship, teaching practicum, or other project, and how it will further their career to their advisor. Students choosing the non-thesis track are encouraged to enroll in ANTH/JUST/SOC 8960 Independent Study or SSCI 8950 Field Experience with their advisor to complete this capstone assignment. Completion of 30 credit hours is required for the non-thesis option, rather than the 36 required for the thesis track.

Role of the Advisor:

Students pursuing the non-thesis track are only required to have one advisor, rather than a committee of three faculty members. Several expectations of the faculty advisor-graduate student dynamic will be provided here. Both parties are expected to provide prompt, constructive, and professional communication. The faculty advisor is expected to read and comment on assessments punctually. Additionally, should the student request assistance with their professional development efforts (i.e., attending conferences, networking), the advisor is expected to help. After outlining a thorough timeline and expectations for the semester, the student and the faculty member will each sign the syllabus they create together, and this will serve as a guide to the expectations of the advisor-advisee dynamic.

Student Outcomes:

The non-thesis track was created with the intention that it would match the difficulty of the thesis track but offer an alternative option for students interested in gaining practical experience related to their career goals. The graduate student, in collaboration with the faculty advisor, will determine the nature and content of a capstone assignment that reflects the practical experience gained and its relevance to the study of social science. A general expectation for the capstone assignment is that the student highlights how the internship, teaching practicum, or project relates to their overarching career goals, the study of social science, and addresses any challenges or issues they encountered throughout their experience. The faculty advisor and the student should expect to meet *at least monthly*, if not more often, throughout the internship semester for progress checks. Ideally, the pair will meet more often to ensure the student completes the requirements satisfactorily.

INTERNSHIP

The graduate student interested in an internship will select a faculty advisor and an internship site before enrolling in SSCI 8950 Field Experience. Students will enroll in this course for 3 credit hours, with the expectation that students will complete 9 hours/week working at the internship site or on assignments related to the SSCI 8950 course. At the beginning of the internship semester, the student will meet with their faculty advisor to draft an agreement outlining expectations for the internship experience and the capstone assignment. This agreement, written as an individualized syllabus, will be signed by the faculty advisor and the student before being submitted to the Graduate Coordinator for their approval.

The professional internship learning track was created for graduate students interested in applying their social science knowledge and skills to real-world situations while gaining professional experience. At the end of the internship experience, the student must demonstrate that they are able to apply professional insights, theories, and skills from their master's coursework to their internship duties. The student should be able to thoroughly evaluate their internship experience and assess the effectiveness of the institutional culture and business practices they observed throughout the internship. The student will develop marketable skills beyond what they have learned through their coursework, setting the student up for success following the completion of the graduate degree.

Based on the student's performance in the internship role, their timely completion of assignments, and the quality of their deliverables, the course will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. The student and faculty advisor are expected to precisely outline standards for passing the class at the beginning of the internship semester. The student is expected to uphold all institutional and departmental standards throughout the internship experience as a representative of Clemson University and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice.

TEACHING PRACTICUM

Graduate students interested in pursuing higher education as a career path may elect to complete a teaching practicum. Students engaging in a teaching practicum should enroll in ANTH/JUST/SOC 8960 Independent Study with their faculty advisor. The student is expected to treat the teaching practicum as a professional experience, much like they would treat the internship. The purpose of this track is to prepare students to manage a course at the collegiate level. The student should be confident in their ability to complete the following tasks by the end of the practicum:

- Develop a clear and comprehensive course syllabus.
- Set achievable learning outcomes for students enrolled in their course.
- Establish a grading breakdown for the course, including the creation of actual assignments that students will be expected to complete throughout the semester.
- Create lecture materials, such as presentations. Lecture aids, such as speaking notes/guides, should be included with submitted presentations.
- Deliver a professional and well-structured lecture that covers material relevant to course learning objectives.
- Elaborate on a personal teaching philosophy and explain how they implement this philosophy in an academic setting.

- Reflect on the teaching practicum and provide an honest account of the experience, providing details on how the teaching practicum has prepared the student to achieve their career goals.

For additional resources related to the teaching practicum, please refer to the [Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation](#) website.

ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate assistantships are distributed by the Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate Advisory Committee. All full-time students in good academic standing (as defined by GPA and progress toward the degree requirements, among other criteria) are eligible for consideration for assistantships and other University financial support. Preference will be given to excellent students making continuous, consistent, and acceptable progress toward completion of degree requirements. Graduate students in the program may only be supported for up to four (4) regular academic semesters. Students are usually required to work 20 hours per week for their assistantship position. Generally, graduate assistants in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice are assigned as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs).

Students are not guaranteed continuation of financial support. Assistantship support is offered on a semester-by-semester basis and is contingent upon the availability of funds and the student's satisfactory progress toward the degree. Eligibility for continued support is defined by academic performance in courses and reasonable progress through the program. The continuation of assistantship support depends on educational and assistantship performance of high quality. A GPA below 3.0, incompletes, inadequate job performance, and no or minimal progress toward degree are grounds for terminating assistantship support from semester to semester. Those graduate students receiving financial support from the program will be assessed on their progress toward thesis completion and on how well they perform their assistantship duties.

The department may terminate assistantships on the basis of poor performance, failure to meet academic requirements (GPA or credit hours), or lack of funding. Every effort will be made to provide adequate notice if an assistantship is being reduced or terminated. Students may explore additional graduate assistant opportunities at [Clemson Job site](#).

Disclaimer: Students employed full-time inside or outside the University are not eligible for assistantships.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT (GTA)

GTAs will help grade exams, meet with students, and hold review sessions, among other duties. All graduate assistantships are considered both professional work experiences and educational experiences. Thus, students should treat the assistantships as they would any paid, professional job in the “regular” workforce. Students should use this opportunity to develop academic skills, learn about various research areas, and form mentoring relationships with their faculty advisors. As employees, GTAs represent and reflect on the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice and the M.S. in Social Science program. Professional deportment and presentations of self are expected throughout the assistantship experience.

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT (GRA)

A limited number of GRA positions are available, through which the student will conduct supervised research or assist with funded study from any source administered by the University. More often, a GRA position may become available for graduate students through the Center for Public Safety Research, (CPSR), or sometimes through the opportunity to more intensively assist an individual faculty member with their research efforts.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice values the professional development of graduate students enrolled in the master's program, primarily by providing funding opportunities to participate in professional conferences and to support thesis research needs (i.e., incentive cards). Limited, competitive funding is available each year to support professional development activities for students. The process of applying for departmental funding is outlined in more detail below.

Policy and Procedures:

Competitive and limited professional development funding is provided on a reimbursement basis. Receipts must be provided to the main office of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice (SACJ) before funds may be dispersed. Occasional funding can be provided at the time of purchase. For example, entrance exams may be funded at the time of purchase, provided that the applicant completes the purchase within the SACJ main office (132 Brackett Hall). Students may request up to \$500 in funding to supplement their educational or career-based opportunity needs.

Graduate students should consult the program CANVAS page for a guide on departmental funding. Here, students may find more information on the specific steps involved in acquiring said funding. Importantly, these guidelines should be consulted *before* funding is dispersed, as approval is required in advance for each purchase made by the student. Please allow sufficient time for funding requests to be processed (at least two weeks). Any questions may be directed to department administrators via the mssocialscience@clemons.edu email.

AWARDS

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice recently introduced the *Excellence in Social Science Graduate Studies* recognition, awarded each year to a student who exemplifies the mission and values of the M.S. in Social Science program. The student selected for this award demonstrates an exemplary capacity to communicate and apply their knowledge of the social sciences while simultaneously “engaging with the social, scientific, economic, and professional challenges of our times.”

Throughout their time in the M.S. Social Science program, this student has not only maintained a high level of academic achievement, but they have also demonstrated a profound ability to engage in theoretically sound, empirically sophisticated research that reflects a significant contribution to the field of social science. Students are nominated for the *Excellence in Social Sciences Graduate Studies* award by faculty members, who will be asked to provide a written explanation about how this student demonstrates the mission and values of the M.S. in Social Science program, as well as why this student deserves the award more broadly. The award is presented annually at the conclusion of the academic year.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students who are graduate teaching or research assistants must arrive in the United States by August 1st.

Academic Matters:

All international students (new and continuing) are required to complete their SEVIS Check-In at the start of the Fall semester. The SEVIS Check-In is completed through the iStart Portal, and students are not required to visit International Services in person to complete this process. The U.S. government requires all graduate international students to be enrolled full-time (9 credit hours) each Fall and Spring semester. This regulation has limited exceptions, and each exception requires review by International Services before enrolling less than full-time. If a student has a question or issue with maintaining full-time enrollment, please ask them to contact International Services for guidance. The U.S. government does not allow international students to enroll in more than one online course per semester.

Authorization to Work:

It is important to reiterate that international students who are graduate teaching or research assistants must arrive in the United States by August 1. This deadline allows the student to satisfy the requirement of being in the country for 14 days before applying for a social security number while simultaneously ensuring that graduate assistants are hired in time for their contract start date of August 15. Failure to obtain a timely employment authorization will result in a loss of pay.

International students must work with Clemson's [International Services Office](#), a part of the [Office of Global Engagement](#), to ensure that proper documentation is provided for approval to work at Clemson. The student may also want to make an appointment to meet the International Human Resource specialist to discuss their individual tax situation.

Verification of English Skills Test (VEST) Requirements:

All new international graduate students who have been offered student-facing assistantships* are required to take the Verification of English Skills (VEST) test if:

- TOEFL speaking score was below 26
- IELTS speaking score was below 8.0
- PTE below 74
- Overall Duolingo score was less than 130

*Does not include research assistants or graders unless they will teach the following semester, in which case it is required.

International students who never submitted English proficiency scores for admission must still be screened for English language proficiency. If a student wishes to be exempt from the VEST because they use English as a native language or have used English as their primary language from age 6 through high school, they will have the option through this [exemption form](#).

THRIVING AS A GRADUATE STUDENT

Academic Performance:

Graduate students in the M.S. in Social Science program must maintain an academic performance level at or above a 3.0 GPA in all graduate work. The continuation of University or external agency financial support and internship placement will be contingent on academic performance at or above a 3.0 GPA. Although a “B” average is expected of all students receiving departmental assistantships, a cumulative GPA of higher than 3.0 is the standard which graduate teaching assistants are held to (and judged by).

Any student whose grade point average falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation, following an official notice by the Graduate School. Subsequently, students placed on academic probation must complete all forms related to their proposed plan for success in order to be retained in the program during this probationary period. Students on academic probation may be terminated from the program on the recommendation of the student’s advisory committee and with the approval of the Graduate Coordinator and the Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice.

Professional Conduct:

It is imperative that students recognize the graduate education as a *professional* experience as well as an academic one. Awarding an advanced degree requires more than merely achieving a minimum grade-point average and completing academic requirements in courses, seminars, and research activities. A graduate education also encompasses the development of acceptable professional standards. Thus, students must conduct themselves as professionals in their dealings with undergraduates, faculty, staff, and other graduate students. Students' conduct during the field placement experience must reflect positively on them, the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, and Clemson University. Any violation of these professional standards may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.

Student Responsibilities:

It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the required actions to meet the deadlines specified by the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice and the Graduate School. While the Graduate Coordinator and the advisory chair are committed to assisting the student, it is ultimately the student’s responsibility to ensure that all necessary forms are correctly completed and filed with the Graduate School and, as appropriate, with the Department Chair and Graduate Coordinator.

Office Space & Supplies:

Students have access to a shared study space in 123 Brackett Hall on the campus of Clemson University. Students may also reserve a private study carrel at Cooper Library in two-hour blocks. Office supplies, the copier, and scantrons are in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice's main office in 132 Brackett Hall. Office supplies are meant to be used for work tasks associated with the assistantship position.

Communication:

Announcements related to the M.S. in Social Science program, the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, and Clemson University will be sent to students via their University email address. All students are expected to check their Clemson email account regularly, as this will be the primary method of communication for the duration of the program. Announcements, updates, and various deadline reminders may also be sent as announcements via the M.S. in Social Science CANVAS page.

Importantly, students will be expected to utilize their @clemson.edu account rather than their @g.clemson.edu account. The University intends to terminate the Clemson Gmail in the near future, alternatively employing Microsoft Outlook. Students will still have access to Google Suite applications such as Google Drive, Google Docs, and Google Slides but will primarily use Microsoft Outlook for email communication.

CANVAS Page:

The M.S. in Social Science program utilizes a CANVAS page as a central location for program resources and relevant information. Here, students can access a copy of the program's graduate handbook, various professional development resources, a calendar of program deadlines, and more. Announcements will be sent out periodically via the CANVAS page, highlighting upcoming deadlines and opportunities relevant to the program's students. Please note that the CANVAS page is a supplementary source of information, and the Graduate School website must be consulted for information not contained within the program CANVAS page.

Library Support:

Clemson Libraries offer extensive support services to help fulfill students' research needs. Visit the [library's home page](#) to access these services. Amanda McLeod (amcleo2@clemson.edu) is the Clemson librarian assigned to assist students in the M.S. in Social Science program. Students should feel free to contact her directly or through the [library portal](#).

Health and Wellness:

Student Health Services strengthens Clemson University by providing quality medical and mental health care, public health leadership, and initiatives that enhance the academic success of our students and promote the health, safety, and well-being of the campus community. Visit their [website](#) or call them at (864) 656-1541.

Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV):

Students are encouraged to begin preparing their resume or CV from their first day in graduate school. Students should consult their advisor, fellow graduate students, and Clemson University's [Center for Career and Professional Development](#).

Clemson Student Resources:

Clemson University offers a wide variety of resources for students, including clubs, student organizations, leadership, and advisory groups. Graduate students should consider participation in these organizations as a professional development opportunity.



Policy Receipt Acknowledgement

I, _____ (please print) hereby acknowledge that I have read and understood the policies and requirements set forth by the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice. I am fully responsible for being familiar with the complete content of the *M.S. in Social Science Graduate Handbook* as well as *Clemson University's Graduate School Policy Handbook*. I understand that I must conduct myself professionally in my interactions with undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and other graduate students. I acknowledge that any violation of these professional standards may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.

Student Name (Printed)

Date

Student Signature

Date

CUID #

Graduate Coordinator Signature

Date

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED COURSE MAPS

The following course maps provide a *recommended* pathway for the on-time completion of the M.S. in Social Science degree. It outlines the typical progression through the curriculum and serves as a planning tool for students as they structure their coursework. Students should be aware that not all courses are offered annually; some are available only on a biannual basis. As such, postponing certain courses may result in delays in progress toward degree completion. Careful planning is essential to avoid scheduling conflicts or missed opportunities.

In the second year of study, students will designate either a thesis or non-thesis learning track. Since the required coursework differs depending on the chosen path, separate course maps are provided for each option. Students should consult the appropriate map when planning their schedules and selecting courses.

Thesis Track

Course Map 2026-2027	
Fall, Year 1	Spring, Year 1
SSCI 8010: Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences (3cr)	SSCI 8060: Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences (3cr)
SSCI 8100: Theoretical Models in Applied Social Research (3cr)	SSCI 8070: Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences II (3cr)
SSCI 8970: Departmental Research and Professional Development Seminar (3cr)	Elective (3cr)
Fall, Year 2	Spring, Year 2
SSCI 8910: Master's Thesis Research (3cr)	SSCI 8910: Master's Thesis Research (3cr)
Electives (6cr)	Electives (6cr)

Total Hours: 36

Non-Thesis Track

Course Map 2026-2027	
Fall, Year 1	Spring, Year 1
SSCI 8010: Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences (3cr)	SSCI 8060: Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences (3cr)
SSCI 8100: Theoretical Models in Applied Social Research (3cr)	SSCI 8070: Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences II (3cr)
SSCI 8970: Departmental Research and Professional Development Seminar (3cr)	Elective (3cr)
Fall, Year 2	Spring, Year 2
Electives (6-9cr)	SSCI 8950: Field Experience (3cr) OR ANTH/JUST/SOC 8960: Independent Study (3cr)
	Elective (3-6cr)

Total Hours: 30

4+1 Suggested Example

Course Map 2026-2027	
Fall, Undergraduate Year	Spring, Undergraduate Year
SSCI 8010: Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences (3cr)	SSCI 8060: Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences (3cr)
Fall, Year 2	Spring, Year 2
SSCI 8100: Theoretical Models in Applied Social Research (3cr)	SSCI 8070: Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences II (3cr)
SSCI 8970: Departmental Research and Professional Development Seminar (3cr)	SSCI 8910: Master's Thesis Research (6cr)
SSCI 8910: Master's Thesis Research (3cr)	Elective (3cr)
Elective (3cr)	

Electives: Medical Sociology (SOC 6800), Sex and Gender (SOC 6610), Globalization and Social Change (SOC 6330), The Community (SOC 6590), Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft (ANTH 6270), Law, Culture, and Society (ANTH 6280), Human Ecology (RS 6010), Sociological Theory (SOC 6040), Ethnographic Fieldwork (SOC 6030), Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences II (SSSCI 8070), Survey Designs for Applied Social Research (SSCI 8030), Evaluation Research (SSCI 8050)

Experiential Electives: Based on their designation of the thesis or non-thesis track, students will enroll in the appropriate experiential elective course. Students pursuing the thesis track will enroll in Master's Thesis Research (SSCI 8910), while student selecting the non-thesis track will enroll in Field Experience (SSCI 8950) or Independent Study (ANTH/JUST/SOC 8960).

APPENDIX B: PROGRAM TIMELINE

Below is a chart of suggested timelines for thesis and non-thesis track students alike. Please note that this program timeline is highly encouraged, but it is not fixed, as there is expected to be some variation among cohorts and cohort members.

Program Timeline				
YEAR 1				
	Coursework	GS2 Plan of Study	Thesis	Non-Thesis
By End of Fall 1				
Exceeds Expectations	3.67+ GPA		Very familiar with the thesis-track option	Very familiar with the non-thesis-track option
Meets Expectations	3.0 GPA			
Does Not Meet Expectations	GPA below 3.0 or any Cs		Does not identify prospective MS track (thesis or non-thesis)	Does not identify prospective MS track (thesis or non-thesis)
By End of Spring 1				
Exceeds Expectations	3.67+ GPA		Topic and Method Identified, Committee Selected	Non-thesis-track plan developed
Meets Expectations	3.0 GPA	GS2 Submitted¹	Topic Identified, Advisor Selected ²	Advisor Selected
Does Not Meet Expectations	GPA below 3.0 or any Cs		Committee not selected	
Summer	External Internship, Summer Research Assistant Hourly, etc.			

Program Timeline				
YEAR 2				
	Coursework	GS2 Plan of Study	Thesis	Non-Thesis
By End of Fall 2				
Exceeds Expectations	3.67+ GPA			
Meets Expectations	3.0 GPA	Final GS2 Submitted	Thesis Proposal Defended ³	Non-thesis deliverable identified
Does Not Meet Expectations	GPA below 3.0 or any Cs		Proposal Date Not Set	
By End of Spring 2				
Exceeds Expectations	3.67+ GPA			
Meets Expectations	3.0 GPA	GS2 Submitted¹	Thesis Defended	Non-thesis deliverable turned in and accepted by advisor
Does Not Meet Expectations	GPA below 3.0 or any Cs		No Thesis Defense Planned	
GRADUATION				
Summer	External Internship, Summer Research Assistant Hourly, etc.			

¹The GS2 Plan of Study should be resubmitted again prior to the semester you graduate with coursework updated. If you plan to graduate in May, you should submit and have your GS2 Plan of Study approved before January (specific dates can be found on the Graduate Website).

²The Thesis Advisor should be **selected by the middle of your second semester**. The advisory committee should be selected by **the beginning of the third semester** (Fall).

³**The Thesis Proposal should be defended by the end of the semester prior to the intended graduation.** If you plan to defend your thesis and graduate in May, you should defend your thesis proposal by December 31. Note that many faculty travel during winter break, so you should not expect committee members to be available after final exams.

For this program, the traditional graduation is the end of the fourth semester (May), however many students opt to spend part of the summer to complete their thesis and graduate in August (exactly 2 years post matriculation).

Many students choose to spend their summer interning or working on their thesis and/or other research projects. However, faculty

are not obligated to any summer commitments, and if you anticipate needing guidance during the summer, you should discuss this possibility of summer work with your Chair/Advisor.

APPENDIX C: GRADUATION DEADLINES

MS in Social Science Deadlines

<u>Anticipated Graduation:</u>	December 2026	May 2027	August 2027
<i>Submit Final GS2 Form</i>	Aug. 19, 2026	Jan. 6, 2027	May 13, 2027
<i>Apply to Graduate</i>	Sept. 8, 2026	Jan. 27, 2027	June 18, 2027
<i>Last Day to Defend</i> (2 weeks b/f approval)	Nov. 6, 2026	March 26, 2027	June 25, 2027
<i>Final Thesis Approval</i> (1 week b/f final subm.)	Nov. 20, 2026	Apr. 9, 2027	July 9, 2027
<i>Submit Final Thesis</i>	Nov. 27, 2026	Apr. 16, 2027	July 16, 2027
<i>Required Revisions</i>	Dec. 4, 2026	Apr. 23, 2027	July 23, 2027
<i>Order Graduation Regalia</i>	Check with the campus bookstore .		
<i>Graduation Dates</i>	See commencement schedule .		