

# **Master of Science with a Major in Dementia and Aging Studies**

## **Handbook for Graduate Studies 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2016-2017**

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Note: This is an interdisciplinary degree but it is housed in and administered by the Sociology department.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The standards set forth in this Handbook represent the requirements for the completion of the Master of Science with a Major in Dementia and Aging Studies (MSDA). Beginning graduate students are expected to familiarize themselves with the standards for the degree they have chosen and be prepared to meet each requirement as they progress through the program. Policies in the handbook can change. Students should read the most recent version of the handbook.

This Handbook may be changed with the recommendation and approval of the departmental Graduate Studies Committee and graduate faculty. No rule specified in this Handbook may violate the standards set forth in the Graduate Catalog of Texas State University.

This 33-hour interdisciplinary, on-line master's degree will offer knowledge about dementia, including issues related to the care of dementia patients, and other topics related to aging and the life course. It is housed in the Department of Sociology, and includes courses from the Department of Communication Disorders, the School of Health Administration, the School of Social Work, and others at a later date.

The program has three tracks (Dementia and Long-Term Care; Practitioner; and Research) each offering different pathways for students upon graduation. The **Dementia and Long-Term Care Track** allies the Long-Term Care certificate with core coursework from the Department of Sociology to provide a social model of care approach to students who want to work in extended living environments when they graduate. The **Practitioner track** offers an in-depth education involving coursework from all participating departments and allowing students to work in any facility or organization whose concern is the health and well-being of the individuals affected by dementia. The **Research track** offers master's-level research courses, as well as core coursework, to prepare students for doctoral programs in Gerontology, Sociology, Dementia Studies, or related fields.

**The mission** of M.S. in Dementia and Aging Studies is to educate from a global, interdisciplinary, and human rights perspective, in order to create compassion and understanding for persons with dementia and for elders. We will accomplish this mission by preparing students for dementia and aging-related careers in teaching, advocacy, research, and leadership, so as to empower caregivers and foster autonomy for persons with dementia and for elders.

## II. ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

Course prerequisites for MSDA students include 6 hours of undergraduate sociology courses, or other social science courses, related to aging or gerontology. Two years of documented experience in the field of gerontology may be substituted for 3 or 6 hours of social science prerequisites. These prerequisites may have been earned at other universities and may be taken prior to entering or in the first semester of the graduate program. Applicants must meet the Graduate College's minimum GPA requirement of 3.1 for the last 60 hours of letter-grade coursework leading to the bachelor's degree, as well as for any

graduate or professional work. In some cases, students whose GPA is between 2.8 and 2.99 for the last 60 hours of letter-grade coursework leading to the bachelor's degree may be admitted conditionally if the application is otherwise strong.

To apply, each applicant must submit the following to the Graduate College at Texas State:

- An official Texas State Graduate College application form;
- A non-refundable application fee of \$40.00;
- Non-Texas State graduates must submit one official transcript from each senior level, post-secondary institution attended. These transcripts must be mailed directly from the institutions to the Office of the Graduate College;
- Three letters of reference from professionals competent to assess the applicant's interest in pursuing a career in this field of study;
- An up-to-date resume; and
- Applicant's written statement of purpose indicating ability and interest in completing the degree program.

### **III. DEGREE OUTLINE**

At the time students enter one of the graduate programs in sociology, a degree outline will be prepared by the Graduate College. The degree outline indicates the hours of required graduate courses in the degree and elective graduate courses. Students may change the official degree outline only with approval of the graduate advisor in sociology and the Graduate College. Appropriate forms must be completed.

### **IV. GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

The MSDA has three tracks, all designed for students with a strong interest in dementia and aging. It is expected that each track will appeal to a specific student audience because each is designed to advance career and professional aspirations. The three tracks share 9 hours of core courses that emphasize the social model of care.

## **THREE TRACKS**

- 1) The **Dementia and Long-Term Care Track** is designed for students whose professional goals correspond with the long term care certificate, but who also want cutting-edge knowledge about dementia and a master's degree to supplement the certificate. A student in this track may be interested in certification as a nursing home administrator.
- 2) The **Practitioner Track** contains a curricular offering for students whose interests are in careers related to dementia and aging, but prefer a wider variety of elective courses related to dementia and aging issues, rather than long-term care. A student in this track may be interested in roles such as health educator, patient advocate, or direct care. Students with undergraduate degrees in helping and health professions (social work and occupational therapy) may also pursue this track in order to expand skill sets and employment opportunities.
- 3) The **Research Track** focuses on research skills and dementia-related courses and is the track for students who want to pursue an academic doctorate in gerontology or aging. It will provide advanced research knowledge to accompany the cutting-edge information offered in the core dementia and aging courses.

## ***COURSES IN EACH TRACK***

The **Dementia and Long-Term Care Track** requires a minimum of 33 hours of graduate coursework. This track is not available to out-of-state or international students. The internship may be completed anywhere in Texas. Required courses for this track are as follows:

<b>Prefix and Number</b>	<b>Required Courses</b>	<b>33 HRS</b>
SOCI 5351	Introduction to Dementia	3
SOCI 5352	Dementia and Caregiving	3
SOCI 5355	Social Psychology of Dementia	3
SOCI 5383	Seminar on Aging	3
LTCA 5322	Environmental Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5323	Governance Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5324	Personnel Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5325	Resident Care Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5335	Financial Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5681	Internship in Long-Term Care	6*
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>33</b>

## **Graduate Certificate in Long Term Care Administration**

Students in this track must contact Professor Todd Mackenzie during their first semester about the LTCA internship. Contact Professor Mackenzie, tm25@txstate.edu, about the application process and timeline.

Refer to the website of the School of Health Administration (<http://www.health.txstate.edu/ha/degs-progs/grad-cert.html>): The graduate certificate in long term care administration (LTCA) is designed to offer the coursework and field placement necessary to become a licensed nursing facility administrator. Long term care is a rapidly growing field with increasing demand for licensed administrators. The graduate certificate in LTCA is designed to meet the Texas license requirements for nursing facility administrators. All questions regarding licensure and State exam requirements should be directed to the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) at 512-438-2015 or [www.dads.state.tx.us](http://www.dads.state.tx.us).

Once accepted, students must complete a five-course (15 semester hour) program of study with a 3.0 or better GPA and no grade lower than “C”. Required courses include:

- LTCA 5322--Environmental Management in Long Term Care
- LTCA 5323--Governance Management in Long Term Care
- LTCA 5324--Personnel Management in Long Term Care
- LTCA 5325--Resident Care Management in Long Term Care
- LTCA 5335--Financial Management in Long Term Care

Certificate requirements include LTCA 5322, 5323, 5324, 5325, and 5335. Field placement is **not** part of the graduate certificate. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) requires that you complete a 1,000 hour administrator-in-training (AIT) internship with a DADS-approved preceptor in a licensed nursing home with a minimum of 60 beds before you take the licensing exam. The School of Health Administration has a limited number of placements for students who cannot find their own sites. To make use of this option would require an additional enrollment in three 6-hour courses on top of the certificate to complete the number of hours required.

The **Practitioner Track** requires a minimum of 33 hours of graduate coursework. Required and elective courses for this track are as follows:

<b>Prefix and Number</b>	<b>Required Courses</b>	<b>12 HRS</b>
SOCI 5351	Introduction to Dementia	3
SOCI 5352	Dementia and Caregiving	3
SOCI 5355	Social Psychology of Dementia	3
SOCI 5383	Seminar on Aging	3

<b>Prefix and Number</b>	<b>Prescribed Elective Courses</b>	<b>21 HRS</b>
CDIS 5380	Communication and Aging	3
LTCA 5322	Environmental Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5323	Governance Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5324	Personnel Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5325	Resident Care Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5335	Financial Management in Long-Term Care	3
LTCA 5681	Internship in Long-Term Care	6*
SOWK 5328	Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Aging	3
SOCI 5363	Seminar in Medical Sociology	3
SOCI 5357	Gender and Aging	3
SOCI 5361	Aging and Dementia: Racial and Ethnic Minorities	3
SOCI 5362	Rural Aging and Dementia	3
SOCI 5354	Theoretical Perspectives in Aging and Dementia	3
SOCI 5356	End of Life	3
SOCI 5388I	Clinical Sociology	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>33</b>

\*Students electing to do the internship for an elective must have taken 2 of the LTCA courses before signing up. Then, they must take 3 additional LTCA courses from those listed above. Students must contact Professor Todd Mackenzie at least a semester prior to starting an internship. Contact Professor Mackenzie, tm25@txstate.edu, about the application process and timeline. Out-of-state and international students are not permitted to take LTCA 5681. The internship must be completed in Texas.

The **Research Track** requires a minimum of 33 hours of graduate coursework. Required and elective courses for this track are as follows:

Prefix and Number	Required Courses	<b>24 HRS</b>
SOCI 5351	Introduction to Dementia	3
SOCI 5352	Dementia and Caregiving	3
SOCI 5355	Social Psychology of Dementia	3
SOCI 5383	Seminar on Aging	3
SOCI 5307	Seminar in Statistics	3
SOCI 5308 or SOCI 5309	Seminar in Research Methods or Seminar in Qualitative Research Methods	3
SOCI 5399A	Thesis	3
SOCI 5399B	Thesis	3

Prefix and Number	Prescribed Elective Courses	<b>9 HRS</b>
CDIS 5380	Communication and Aging	3
SOWK 5328	Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Aging	3
SOCI 5308	Seminar in Research Methods	3
SOCI 5309	Seminar in Qualitative Research Methods	3
SOCI 5318	Seminar in Advanced Data Applications	3
SOCI 5363	Seminar in Medical Sociology	3
SOCI 5357	Gender and Aging	3
SOCI 5361	Aging and Dementia: Racial and Ethnic Minorities	3
SOCI 5362	Rural Aging and Dementia	3
SOCI 5354	Theoretical Perspectives in Aging and Dementia	3
SOCI 5356	End of Life	3
SOCI 5388I	Clinical Sociology	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>33</b>

## **Research Track: Theses**

### **A. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Expectations for completed theses are higher than expectations in other graduate classes. When completing theses, students will receive suggestions, recommendations, and criticism about their writing and ideas. They will continue to submit revisions until those revisions meet the standards of the Department and the Graduate College. Committee chairs may require a week or more to read and make suggestions on each draft. Drafts submitted to the chair must be proofread carefully; students should not submit rough drafts to the chair, nor should students expect more than one complete edit from the thesis chair. Use of the American Sociological Association Style Guide (current edition) for citation and reference format is required by the Department of Sociology. Students cannot defend their thesis until it meets Department and the Graduate College requirements and standards, and the committee approves the report.

Theses require that students interact with many groups in order to achieve their goals and objectives. Students are expected to be professional, civil, and mature in their interactions with faculty, staff, and students, and, when applicable, respondents. Successful completion of the thesis is the student's responsibility. Students must identify and meet all deadlines and administrative work (e.g., signatures needed) related to the project and the defense. Refer to information on the MSDA TRACS site and the Graduate College website.

Students in the research track must complete and defend their thesis in their final semester. Students have the option of an in-person thesis defense, or an online defense. Students opting for an online defense have two options: They may choose a synchronous Skype, video conference, or conference call with their committee members, or they may record a presentation of their thesis findings, which shall be followed by questions from the committee. The student will have one week to respond to the committee's questions in writing by sending answers to the thesis committee chair and committee members. The committee will evaluate the answers as exceeding expectations, meeting expectations, or failing to meet expectations. If the answers do not meet expectations, students must consult readings and re-write the answer to the question(s) that do not meet expectations.

### **B. SELECTION OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE**

To begin the thesis process, each student should consult with the Graduate Advisor before selecting a chairperson. The student should have ideas about his or her topic and an appropriate member of the graduate faculty to serve as committee chairperson and director of the thesis. In general, the choice of committee chairperson and director of the thesis is determined by the faculty member's interest in the subject matter proposed by the student. After a discussion with the Graduate Advisor, the student may approach a faculty member to a request to chair the committee; if the faculty member agrees to do so, he or she must provide written notification of that willingness to act as the thesis advisor before the student will be permitted to enroll in Sociology 5398A or 5399A. Once a member of the graduate faculty in the Department has agreed to serve as chairperson and director of the thesis, he or she will help the student select a committee to direct the thesis. Students should plan to meet with their chairs to discuss expectations and progress on the proposal. A student should have the approval of the chairperson before

consulting other faculty members to serve on the committee.

*The thesis committee* consists of the committee chair and faculty member from sociology and one faculty member from outside the department. The chair should be someone whose area of specialization is related to the thesis topic, if possible. Students can find areas of specialization on the department homepage and ask faculty about their other areas. The chair can provide possible recommendations for the other committee members.

## C. THESIS GUIDELINES

The thesis is a major research project about a sociological topic. Students choose thesis topics based on their areas of interest in sociology and by identifying a significant empirical gap in the academic literature. The thesis must reflect a graduate level understanding of the topic and of sociology, as well as the ability to communicate that understanding on paper. The thesis is not about students' personal beliefs, values, or opinions. It must demonstrate that students have an understanding—and can communicate that understanding in writing—of a sociological approach to the topic in an organized, coherent way.

Students must also consult with their committee chair regarding human subjects review and the IRB application process. Most theses require IRB review for approval or exemption (except for example, projects relying on content analyses of media). Students must include, in their planning, the time required for IRB application review. They must ask their thesis committee chair to read and approve all documents required for the IRB application. Students should NOT send anything to the IRB without prior approval from the thesis committee chair. Students must complete the online CITI Program for "Social and Behavioral Students" before they can submit applications to the IRB for approval. All students should complete the CITI program during their first semester, if possible. Check the Texas State human subjects webpage for updates.

Students must write a thesis proposal. The proposal describes the proposed thesis study in detail. Because this document is a *proposal*, the project may change as a result of the feedback of the chair and committee. The committee chair will determine whether the project is appropriate for a master's thesis. Thesis proposals typically include the following items:

1. An introduction and rationale: Introduce the topic and explain why it is important to study. What is the sociological significance? What is the sociological rationale for conducting this research? Students should not discuss why the topic is important to *them*; instead, they shall emphasize the sociological relevance.
2. A literature review: What do sociologists already know about this topic? This section summarizes most of the relevant previous sociological studies, as they relate to the topic. It should define all central concepts and identify the gap in the literature. It should discuss how the proposed study fills that gap.
3. Theoretical framework(s): This section should describe the theoretical background of the main question. It will discuss the main theories that are relevant to the study. (Note: This document is a proposal; the theories employed in the completed thesis might change.)
4. A description of research questions or hypotheses and rationale.

5. A proposed methodology: Students must apply what have learned in methods courses to their study design. This section must discuss the proposed method and why this method is appropriate for the research questions or hypotheses. It must describe the proposed sample, sampling procedure, and how you will get access to your sample. It must indicate whether the project is under review at the IRB. Quantitative studies shall include a description of independent and dependent variables and how they will be operationalized. If applicable, the survey questionnaire will be part of the appendix. Qualitative studies shall include an explicit discussion of respondents or sites, and the interview guide, if applicable.
6. A proposed and realistic timeline
7. A bibliography (Ask your faculty supervisor for the correct format e.g. APA)
8. Appendices (if applicable):
  - a. Copy of IRB approval or exemption, when appropriate; most theses must have IRB approval or receive an IRB exemption. Students should consult with their committee chair about the IRB process.
  - b. Interview guide, survey instrument, etc.
  - c. Consent form

*After the committee chair approves the proposal, the student must*

1. Submit the proposal to the committee members;
2. Submit the proposal to the Graduate Programs Administrator at [mv1066@txstate.edu](mailto:mv1066@txstate.edu); the graduate programs administrator will complete a Thesis Proposal form and email to the student a completed Thesis Proposal form for verification;
3. Print, sign and ask the committee chair and committee members to sign the thesis proposal form; and
4. Submit the thesis proposal with the IRB approval or exemption (if applicable) and thesis proposal form with the committee signatures to the department's graduate director office administrator for approval. If approved, the graduate director will forward the thesis and the proposal form to the department chair for his or her signature. The office staff will forward the signed and completed form and proposal to the Dean of the Graduate College for approval.

#### D. THESIS: THE DEFENSE AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The thesis must demonstrate scholarship and should serve as a “showcase” for the student's abilities and knowledge in the field of aging and dementia studies. The organization of the paper must conform to the general format for a graduate thesis outlined in the current edition of the *Graduate Thesis Handbook*. Citation and bibliographic entries must follow the format set by the faculty supervisor (e.g. APA, Chicago Style).

If the chair approves the thesis report, then the student may send the thesis to the committee and set up

the defense. The student should prepare a PowerPoint presentation outlining the major ideas. The defense is considered part of the comprehensive exam. The committee and other faculty present will ask questions about the thesis topic, specifically, and aging and dementia studies, generally. Refer to more specific guidelines on TRACS about the defense and comprehensive exam.

During the thesis defense, the comprehensive oral exam will cover the thesis report, as well as the student's mastery of studies in dementia and aging. The members of the student's thesis committee will constitute the final oral examination committee. They will be the only faculty members to decide whether the student passes the examination.

One bound copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Department of Sociology, and one bound copy, to the chairperson of the thesis committee. The student is encouraged to retain a final copy of their thesis for personal use. Students should submit their thesis to the library electronically. Students must still submit a hard copy to the sociology department and his or her committee chair.

### **Before the defense, students must**

- 1) Contact the graduate advisor.
- 2) Send copies of the thesis to the committee and confirm the date, time, and place of the defense. Give the completed and polished thesis to the committee at least one week before the defense date.
- 3) Check the graduate school deadlines and plan carefully.
- 4) E-mail the thesis title, abstract, and names of committee members, to the sociology graduate programs administrator one week prior to the scheduled defense date.
- 5) Study previous methods, theory, and other class notes in order to prepare for questions during the defense.

### **After the defense, students must**

- 1) Complete revisions and send the final document to the committee chair for his or her final approval.
- 2) Confirm the correct format. The MA-thesis must follow the correct Graduate College format exactly. Thesis chairs and sociology department office staff *will not* help with these details because confirming format, etc. are the student's responsibility. Be aware of Graduate College deadlines.
- 3) Provide a bound copy for the sociology department library (submit it to the Director of Graduate Programs in the sociology department) *and* for the committee chair.
- 4) Complete the online exit interview for the sociology department.
- 5) Celebrate this fine accomplishment.

## E. APPEAL PROCESS AFTER THESIS DEFENSE

Should a student take issue with the committee's decision on the comprehensive exam, the following process should be employed to appeal that decision.

1. The student must notify the members of the committee in writing within 10 working days of the decision that the student requests the committee to reconsider its decision. The student should identify specific points or issues to be reconsidered by the committee.
2. The committee has 10 working days after receiving the request to respond to the student in writing.
3. If no satisfactory conclusion can be reached at this level, the student may appeal in writing to the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology, who will consult with the MSDA Faculty Advisory Council.
4. The DGPS has 5 working days after receiving the request to respond to the student in writing.

## F. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS AND PRESENTATION: LONG TERM CARE AND PRACTITIONER TRACK

**Long-term Care and Practitioner Tracks:** In their last semester, students in the Long Term Care and Practitioner tracks must complete a written take-home exam and a recorded presentation, both of which will be assessed on a pass/fail basis by a committee of graduate faculty. If a student's recorded presentation or written exam answers fail to meet expectations, they will need to consult with the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology about recording a new presentation and/or consulting with readings and re-writing the answer to the question(s) that do not meet expectations.

In order to schedule and complete written comprehensive exams, students in the MSDA (Long-term care and practitioner tracks) must contact the Director of Graduate Programs in sociology by the second Friday of the semester in which they want to complete exams.

***Committee:*** Students will choose a committee of three faculty, subject to approval of the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology. There must be one person from the sociology department, preferably a faculty member from whom the student has taken a MSDA class. The other two committee members can be from sociology, social work, long term care, and/or communication disorders. When possible the committee should be interdisciplinary.

***Written comprehensive exam:*** The written take-home exam will assess students' understanding and application of interdisciplinary theories and empirical studies on dementia and aging. Students are permitted to use their notes and reading materials from their coursework in order to complete this exam. Students must contact the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology (DGPS) in order to receive the questions that they must answer. The exam MUST be completed **three weeks prior to the “thesis” defense deadlines listed on the Graduate College webpage.** The exam must be completed and turned in before the student records the presentation.

Students have 7 days from the date that the MSDA graduate advisor sends them the following

comprehensive exam questions to complete the answers and send the answers back to the DGPS. Students must use your MSDA course material to answer these questions. Each answer should be approximately 6-8 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, and written in essay format (complete sentences, organized into paragraphs, etc.). The more examples from readings, the stronger the answers (although paraphrase as much as possible; only 1-2 direct quotes per page). Incorporate as much evidence from course readings as possible. The questions allow students to show your mastery of all the material they have covered during their degree. Once proofread and complete, students must submit answers to Turn It In ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)). The committee chair will provide the Turn It In password that students must use to access the site. Students must also send their answers to the DGPS and committee as Word documents (no PDFS or other formats).

*Citation guidelines, avoiding plagiarism, and academic (dis)honesty:* Students can refer to course syllabi and also use additional academic material for answers. Students should NOT use websites, Wikipedia, dictionaries or encyclopedias in answers. Cite only academic books, articles, and book chapters. Cite as much as possible and draw on **all** MSDA coursework (Sociology, Long Term Care Administration, Social Work, and/or Communication Disorders). Include a bibliography. Students should cite using one format throughout (ASA, APA, MLA, or Chicago Style). Indicate the citation format on the title page of the answers. This is an open book, open notes exam, but students must not collaborate with current or former classmates. They must work independently. They must not discuss your exam or share notes or outlines or any sort with others in the program. Finally, they are not permitted to share exam questions with current or former students. See below for more information.

*Presentation:* Students in the Long-term Care and Practitioner Tracks must also complete a presentation (about 20 minutes), which they can conduct in person with the committee, or record for their graduate faculty committee to evaluate. The presentation must discuss the student's career plans and how the MSDA coursework has aided the student with his or her career plans. It must demonstrate what the student has learned in MSDA courses that has helped or will help the student's career. It must also incorporate important theories and studies from Sociology, Long Term Care, Social Work, and/or Communication Disorders (at least two of those fields). The presentation must incorporate the application of the research and theories in terms of career, policy and practice (application) to the lives of elders and caregivers. The presentation must be complete, recorded, and uploaded to the MSDA Comprehensive Exam Tracs site (not the MSDA student/faculty site) or sent directly to the committee within a week of sending written answers and at least two weeks **before the thesis defense deadlines** posted on the Graduate College website: [http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/The-Diss\\_Info/T-D\\_Deadlines.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/The-Diss_Info/T-D_Deadlines.html).

Post your audiovisual presentation on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). If you would like to keep your information restricted to your committee, be sure to select **Unlisted** as your privacy setting.

Add the link to your presentation to the Student Presentations area in TRACS. Use 10-15 PowerPoint slides to give a formal, audiovisual presentation for approximately 15-20 minutes.

Specific advice:

- 1) Use 10-15 PowerPoint slides for the presentation.
- 2) Be careful not to put too much information on each slide.
- 3) Limit the use of photos or pictures.
- 4) Organize the slides in a logical order.
- 5) Start with an introduction.
- 6) Try not to read the slides.
- 7) Do not rush, but do not go over time.
- 8) Your first PowerPoint slide should list your name and the semester in which you are defending.
- 9) Additional advice = Do not rush. Use complete sentences. Avoid “like,” “um,” “kind of,” “you know,” etc. Maintain good eye contact. Make sure the presentation can be heard easily. No gum, etc.

**Evaluation of Comprehensive Exam Answers:** A committee of graduate faculty will evaluate content, insight, correct application of course material, empirical evidence, and citations/sources to determine whether the answers pass or fail. The committee will also examine the answers to ensure that they adhere to our University’s Honor Code (see <http://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/>). If a student appears to have violated the Honor Code, it is up to the discretion of the student’s committee to decide on the extent of the violation and whether to report the student to the university Honor Code Council for a violation or violations. If a student fails an answer or answers, he or she will be asked by the comprehensive exam committee chair to consult readings, re-write and re-submit answers to *Turn It In* ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)) within 7 days of receiving the committee’s evaluation. The committee will then evaluate the student’s revision. If a student does not pass the second attempt, then he or she will not be able to graduate in that particular semester. He or she will have to reapply for graduation and will be required to return for the next long semester (fall or spring) after studying for comprehensive exams and take comprehensive exams in one or more areas during that subsequent long semester. The committee will provide the students with suggestions for improvement. The committee can also request that students take additional course work, complete individual directed readings, clinical studies or reviews, complete individual research in specified areas, and/or other assignments that would be appropriate for assisting the student. A new faculty committee will then evaluate the student’s third attempt at answering the comprehensive exam questions successfully. If the student fails the third attempt, then he or she will not be able to graduate with the MSDA. If he or she is dissatisfied with the decision of the committee at this point, then the student can submit a written appeal to the Director of Graduate Programs in Sociology, who will consult with the MSDA Faculty Council about the next course of action.

## **V. APPLYING FOR GRADUATION**

Apply for graduation during the first week of the semester you plan to graduate. Check the Graduate College deadlines ([http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/The-Diss\\_Info/T-D\\_Deadlines.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/The-Diss_Info/T-D_Deadlines.html)) and plan carefully.

## **VI. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Students found guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to the disciplinary action specified in the Texas State Student Handbook. The rules related to academic dishonesty can be found on the sociology department website and in the University's Honor Code (<http://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/>).

Academic dishonesty refers to a variety of transgressions such as cheating on a test to committing plagiarism for a written assignment. The graduate advisor, MSDA faculty, and Texas State University assume that it is the responsibility of each student to know what constitutes academic dishonesty. University statements regarding academic dishonesty can be found in the Texas State Handbook, the University PPS, and on the MSDA Tracs site. In general: when in doubt, cite. If it's not your idea, you must cite it. If you paraphrase an idea, you must cite the author. If you take a direct quote (three consecutive words or more) from a source, you must place direct quotes around the quote, provide a page number (if applicable), and cite the author. Be very careful about taking information from authors' literature reviews. If you find yourself thinking, "I wonder whether this is academic dishonesty," then it probably is. *Unintentional plagiarism has the same consequences as intentional plagiarism.* Students often engage in the former, so the general guideline (when in doubt, cite) is useful to follow. Read the handouts on the graduate student MSDA Tracs site about plagiarism. Also refer to the following site: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>.

## **VII. DEADLINES**

The Office of the Dean of the Graduate College sets all official deadlines for theses, comprehensive exams, and graduation applications. For the **exact deadline dates** refer to the Graduate College site.

## **VIII. DEPARTMENT POLICY: STUDENT FITNESS AND PERFORMANCE**

Students enrolled in all academic programs in the Department of Sociology must maintain high scholastic standards and develop a mastery of the knowledge and methods of the discipline. Students are expected to demonstrate emotional and mental fitness in their interactions with others, use skills and methods that are generally accepted by others in the profession, and conform to the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics, the Texas State University Honor Code, and the Texas State University Code of Student Conduct. A student's acceptance in any program does not guarantee the student's fitness to remain in that program. The faculty is responsible for insuring that only those students who continue to meet program standards are allowed to continue in any program. Refer to the department website for evaluation criteria and the student review process.