

GRADUATE RESEARCH

Student Handbook



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¹ This guide is applicable for graduate students enrolled from August 2026 onwards. The information provided may be subject to amendments.

1. General Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences! Congratulations on successfully enrolling in one of Asia's consistently top-ranking departments. Established in 1965, we are the flagship and largest Sociology and Anthropology department in Singapore. Currently, our faculty comprises over 35 full-time members, each holding Ph.D. from globally renowned and prestigious universities. Our department's expertise lies in Anthropology, Demography, and Sociology, with a strong emphasis on research centered around Asia.

As a new graduate student, we are confident that your experience with us will be both rewarding and fulfilling. Our department's Graduate Studies goals are:

- To establish a globally recognized Ph.D. program focused on Asia.
- To produce Ph.D. graduates who will contribute significantly to the advancement of Asian social sciences and actively engage in global academia.
- To produce Master's graduates who are prepared to pursue further academic endeavours and/or bring valuable skills to both private and public sectors.

1.1 Department's Organization Structure

Head of Department (HoD) and Deputy Heads of Department (Dy HoDs):

Name	Role	Email address
Prof Kelvin E.Y. Low	Head of Department	sochead@nus.edu.sg
Prof Feng Qiushi	Deputy Head	fengqiushi@nus.edu.sg
A/Prof Zheng Mu	Deputy Head	socmuz@nus.edu.sg
Dr Adelyn Lim	Deputy Head	socall@nus.edu.sg

Graduate Studies Committee:

Name	Role	Email address
Prof Feng Qiushi	Chair	fengqiushi@nus.edu.sg
A/Prof Zheng Mu	Member	socmuz@nus.edu.sg
Dr Noorman Abdullah	Member	socnooa@nus.edu.sg
Dr Ali Kassem	Member	ali.kass@nus.edu.sg

Graduate Studies – Admin:

Ms Haseena Hashim	sochhas@nus.edu.sg
Ms Rose Yong	roseyong@nus.edu.sg

The Department’s General Admin Office is located in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at Block AS1 #03-06, 11 Arts Link, Singapore 117573.

Our office hours are as follows:

- Mondays to Thursdays: 8:30am to 5.30pm
- Fridays: 8:30am to 5:00pm
(with a lunch break from 1:00pm to 2:00pm)

Please note that there may be occasional changes to these office hours.

1.2 A Safe Space for Students and Staff

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology holds sexual and gender-based harassment, misconduct, bullying, and violence to be contrary to its core principles of respect, equality, and the rights of all to a safe and healthy environment.

The Department places a high priority on mutual respect, dignity, diversity and inclusion and expects professionalism from all members of the Sociology community. Like the university, it is committed to a zero-tolerance policy against sexual misconduct, harassment, or bullying in any form by/against students or staff members.

The department has formed a committee on sexual harassment that strives to always make this a safe space for students and staff.

We also have a Care Unit and a graduate representative as direct points of contact should anyone need to reach out to us. We want you to feel safe and comfortable in letting us know if you have experienced sexual misconduct or have been witness to it. Please reach out to any members of the departmental Care Unit.

Department Care Unit:

Dr Ivan Kwek	ivankwek@nus.edu.sg
A/Prof Zachary Howlett	zachary.howlett@nus.edu.sg
Ms Rose Yong	roseyoung@nus.edu.sg

2. Master of Social Sciences in Sociology (M.SOC.SCI., SOCIOLOGY)

Programme Requirements

The programme requirements for the M.Soc.Sci in Sociology programme (M.Soc.Sci) are designed to ensure rigorous academic preparation and successful completion of the M.Soc.Sci programme, preparing students for advanced careers in sociology and related fields.

All M.Soc.Sci students are required to abide and fulfil the stipulated academic requirements.

2.1 Courses Requirements:

Complete 5 courses with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 (equivalent to a B- grade).

Courses include:

- (a) SC5770 Graduate Research Seminar (Pass/Fail)
- (b) SC5101 Graduate Research Methods
- (c) SC5102 Quantitative Methods or SC5103 Qualitative Methods
- (d) SC6102 Sociological Theory
- (e) One elective module of choice

2.2 Exemption Policy

No exemptions are permitted for M.Soc.Sci students. All courses must be completed as stipulated.

2.3 Thesis Requirements and Submission

All M.Soc.Sci students are required to write an original thesis comprising 30,000 words and there is no provision for extending the word limit of the thesis. The thesis will be graded by a minimum of two internal examiners.

Submission of Thesis

- Title and Abstract: All students must provide the thesis title and a 150-word abstract to the Graduate Administrator three months prior to thesis submission.
- Advisor Approval: Before thesis submission, students must confirm and seek consensus from the advisor on the readiness for examination and sign off on the thesis.
- Submission Deadline: The thesis must be submitted before the end of the candidature period.
- Examination: Examiners are given two months to evaluate the thesis. Based on the examiners' reports, students are required to revise the thesis in consultation with their advisor(s) within the specified timeframe spelt by the examiners. Do note that it is not required to undergo an oral defence.

2.4 Graduate Supervision

All M.Soc.Sci students would typically suggest an advisor upon application to NUS. In the event that the students did not do so, they should consult and select an advisor from the Department's faculty. The faculty profile and research interests are available on the Department's website (<https://fass.nus.edu.sg/socanth/faculty/>).

Students who have suggested an advisor in their application are also under no obligation to be supervised by her/him. Should students wish to change thesis advisors, students must nominate an advisor by the end of the first semester. The advisor (and co-advisor, if applicable) must also be faculty members of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

In the event that students decide to change their advisor(s) after they have confirmed one during their candidature, students must notify the Graduate Chair of their intention to do so through email.

2.5 Elective courses (Independent Study Course - ISC)

M.Soc.Sci students may choose to undertake an Independent Study Course (ISC) as their elective.

The ISC supervisor must be a faculty member of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology; however the supervisor must not be the thesis' advisor.

The ISC topic cannot overlap with the student's thesis topic and must be approved by the Department.

2.6 Professional Development

Attendance at department seminars, including campus visits, is mandatory for all graduate students. These activities are integral to professional training and development.

2.7 Assessment

All graduate courses are assessed through 100% Continuous Assessment (CA).

This includes various components such as homework, quizzes, tests, essays, projects, seminar presentations, tutorial performance, field trips, and other specified project work.

2.8 Timeline:

By the end of the first year of candidature, students must successfully complete and pass all required courses.

During the second year of candidature, the focus shifts to completing data collection and writing the thesis.

The maximum duration of candidature for M.Soc.Sci candidates is 36 months (3 years).

The department strongly advises completing the program within 24 months (2 years).

2.9 Proposed M.Soc.Sci programme plan:

Semester 1	(a) Complete 2-3 modules (b) Find Thesis Advisor
Semester 2	(a) Complete remaining modules (b) Confirm advisor by the beginning of Semester 2 (c) Prepare and submit DERC (Ethics) form (d) Prepare and submit fieldwork funding through GRSS (if applicable)
Semester 3	(a) Read SC5770 Graduate Research Seminar (b) Intensified data collection (including fieldwork, if applicable) (c) The department recommends that thesis drafting and writing should commence shortly after fieldwork has been done
Semester 4 onwards	(a) Writing and submission of thesis (b) Throughout the candidature, students should be regularly attending the student-run Graduate Seminar Series and the Department’s seminar series (including campus visits of job candidates). However, in the fourth semester, they will make one compulsory paper presentation in the Graduate Seminar Series.

3. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Programme Requirements

The programme requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Sociology / Anthropology programmes are designed to ensure rigorous academic preparation and successful completion of each respective program, equipping students for advanced careers in sociology, anthropology, and related fields.

All Ph.D. students are required to abide and fulfil the stipulated academic requirements.

3.1 Ph.D. in Sociology

Ph.D. candidates in Sociology must complete 10 courses with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5 (B grade) to graduate. These courses include:

- SC6770 Graduate Research Seminar (Pass/Fail)
- SC5101 Graduate Research Methods
- SC5102 Quantitative Methods
- SC5103 Qualitative Methods
- SC6102 Sociological Theory
- Five other electives (refer to the sections on 'Elective Courses' and 'Course Exemptions')

A) Academic Performance:

- If the GPA falls below 3.5 (but > 3.0), the student will be issued an academic warning.
- Students whose GPA is below 3.0 for 2 consecutive semesters will be placed on probation for the first semester followed by dismissal.

B) Additional Requirements (Cohort AY2022/23 onwards):

- All Ph.D. students must take NG5001 Academic Communication for Graduate Researchers.

NG5001 Academic Communication for Graduate Researchers

NG5001 facilitates further development of students' academic literacies in critical reading, writing and oral presentation. For critical reading, students will be guided to deconstruct and evaluate arguments – competences which students will then deploy by writing a proposal. In writing the proposal, students will need to demonstrate the ability to use suitable academic conventions. This proposal will subsequently be delivered as an oral presentation to a cross-disciplinary audience. This module utilizes a blended learning approach, where students' learning experiences will comprise in-class and online synchronous and asynchronous lessons and activities.

C) Continuous Assessment:

- All graduate courses are assessed 100% through Continuous Assessment (CA), which may include homework, quizzes, tests, essays, projects, seminar presentations, performance during tutorials, field trips, and other project work as specified by the course instructor.
- Students must complete and pass all their courses by the end of their second year

of candidature.

D) Examinations and Thesis:

- Students must pass two Comprehensive Examinations (CEs) and Qualifying Examinations (QE) within 24 months of entering the programme.
- Students must write and pass their thesis (100,000 words) with no word extension. The thesis will be appraised by at least two internal examiners. An external examiner may be appointed with support from the Head of Department and Vice Dean (Graduate Studies) and final approval from NUS Graduate School.

E) Department Seminar Attendance:

Attendance at department seminars (including campus visits) is mandatory for all graduate students as part of their professional training and development.

3.2 Ph.D. in Anthropology

Ph.D. candidates in Anthropology must complete 10 courses with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5 (B grade) to graduate. These courses include:

- SC6770 Graduate Research Seminar (Pass/Fail)
- SC5101 Graduate Research Methods
- SC5103 Qualitative Methods
- SC5215 Visual Ethnography or SC6224 Producing Ethnography
- SC6216 The Anthropological Perspective
- Five other electives

A) Academic Performance:

- If the GPA falls below 3.5 (but > 3.0), the student will be issued an academic warning.
- Students whose GPA is below 3.0 for 2 consecutive semesters will be placed on probation for the first semester followed by dismissal.

B) Additional Requirements (Cohort AY2022/23 onwards):

- All Ph.D. students must take NG5001 Academic Communication for Graduate Researchers.

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- Students must pass two Comprehensive Examinations (CEs) and Qualifying Examinations (QE) within 24 months of entering the programme.
- Students must write and pass their thesis (100,000 words) with no word extension. The thesis will be appraised by at least two internal examiners. An external examiner may be appointed with support from the Head of Department and Vice Dean (Graduate Studies) and final approval from NUS Graduate School.

E) Department Seminar Attendance:

Attendance at department seminars (including campus visits) is mandatory for all graduate students as part of their professional training and development.

3.3 Graduate Supervision

All Ph.D. students (both in Sociology and Anthropology) would typically suggest an advisor upon application to NUS. In the event that the students did not do so, they should consult and select an advisor from the Department's faculty. The faculty profile and research interests are available on the Department's website (<https://fass.nus.edu.sg/socanth/faculty/>).

Students who have suggested an advisor in their application are also under no obligation to be supervised by her/him. Should students wish to change thesis advisors, students must nominate an advisor by the end of the first semester. The advisor (and co-advisor, if

applicable) must also be faculty members of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

In the event that students decide to change their advisor(s) after they have confirmed one during their candidature, students must notify the Graduate Chair of their intention to do so through email.

3.4 Elective Courses

Ph.D. students are required to complete five elective courses, with the following provisions:

- A) Two Independent Study Courses (ISCs):
 - One ISC must be coded as an SC-course and the other as a non-SC course.
 - One non-SC course, which includes the non-SC Independent Study course.
- B) The ISC supervisor cannot be the student's thesis advisor.
- C) If the student takes the option to do two ISCs (one SC-coded and one non-SC coded), one of the ISCs cannot be on their dissertation topic. If two ISCs are chosen, one cannot be on the dissertation topic.
- D) ISC topics must be approved by the Department.

3.5 Course Exemptions

Students may be exempted from **one** course, excluding core courses. The exempted course must have similar learning objectives, content, and sophistication as the corresponding NUS course. Only courses completed at Level 5000 or above (i.e., Masters level and above) and relevant to the student's research degree program are eligible. The course must have been completed less than five years before admission. Exemption applications must be submitted before the end of the first semester of candidacy.

3.6 Ph.D. Thesis Committee (TC)

The Thesis Committee (TC) should be formed within the first year of student's registration and the TC comprises of the thesis advisor and two faculty members. Only one TC member can be from outside the department or NUS. If the student opts for co-supervision, the co-supervisor must be from within the department. The advisor must inform the Department Graduate Chair of the TC nomination via email.

3.7 Written Comprehensive Examinations (CEs)

The Comprehensive Examinations (CEs) consist of two open-book take-home review essays on topics in general sociology, to be completed by the 21st month of candidature.

This allows at least three months for re-taking the exams if needed. Each CE should be completed within one week (i.e., 7 days from the time questions are distributed to the time of submission).

One of the topics for the essay should be a substantive field relating to the candidate's selected area of specialization, while the topic for the second essay could be another substantive field arising from the exposure that the candidate would have gained from their coursework component. Each review essay should be approximately 6,000 to 8,000 words, modeled after review articles in the Annual Review of Sociology or Annual Review of Anthropology.

The CE questions and reading lists will be developed and graded by the thesis advisor(s) and thesis committee members (High Pass, Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail), in consultation with the Department's Graduate Studies Committee. It is recommended that the reading lists ought to be compiled by the end of the second semester.

Both CE essays, examiner reports, thesis proposal, and reading lists must be submitted to the Head of Department (HoD) via email at least two weeks before the proposed Oral Defense for endorsement. Upon approval sought from the HoD, students shall proceed with their oral defense.

3.8 Thesis Proposal and Oral Defence (QE)

The thesis research proposal should be 30-50 pages, based on the reading list set in consultation between the student and the advisor(s). The oral defense is before a three-member panel, including the TC and advisor, and is graded as Pass or Fail.

If the student fails the defense, the student may retake the defense based on departmental recommendation. Despite a second attempt is allowed upon failure, however a second failure shall result in termination of Ph.D. candidature.

In selected cases, if the student can complete a reasonably good Master thesis, the Ph.D. candidature may be downgraded to a Master.

Students are required to complete all components of the Qualifying Examination (QE), the Oral Defense of their 30-50 page proposal, and the two review essays that will constitute their CE, by the end of the fourth semester (i.e., 24th month). Students who are unable to pass the QE by then will have their candidature terminated. The Department therefore recommends that the components of the QE be paced out over the second to fourth semester of candidature.

3.9 Submission of Ph.D QE Reports and Ph.D. Top-Up

The QE report must be submitted within two weeks after the examination. Research scholars (RS) will be disbursed a top-up award of S\$500 for those pass their QEs. The top-up for students on RS will end at the earliest of the following dates:

- (a) After two years of award; or
- (b) At the end of the fourth year of the student's candidature; or
- (c) Expiry of RS (excluding extensions)

A student who fails any comprehensive examination or oral defense is deemed to have failed the QE. The QE report must be submitted irrespective of whether a student has passed or failed the QE. A second Ph.D. QE may be attempted within the first two years of the candidature should the student fail at the first attempt (full-time and part-time candidates).

For research scholars (RS) who fail any component of the QE, the scholarship will only be suspended upon recommendation of the examination panel. In the event the Ph.D. candidature is downgraded to a Masters, upon the recommendation of the department, an RS will cease to receive any financial assistance upon downgrading.

3.10 Submission of Thesis

- **Title and Abstract:** All students must provide the thesis title and a 150-word abstract to the Graduate Administrator three months prior to thesis submission.
- **Advisor Approval:** Before thesis submission, students must confirm and seek consensus from the advisor on the readiness for examination and sign off on the thesis.
- **Submission Deadline:** The thesis must be submitted before the end of the candidature period.
- **Examination:** Examiners are given two months to evaluate the thesis. Based on the examiners' reports, students are required to revise the thesis in consultation with their advisor(s) within the specified timeframe spelt by the examiners. Do note that it is not required to undergo an oral defence.

3.11 Oral Examination

Based on the examiners' reports and results, the students will be informed that the oral examination is being scheduled in four to six weeks' time, subject to the availability of the Oral Panel members. However, the students may be asked to revise and resubmit the thesis for further examination before the oral examination is scheduled.

The Oral Panel would be a subset of the thesis examination panel, having at least two of the examiners in the panel. If an external examiner is appointed as an oral panel member

in addition to the internal examiners, the oral examination can be conducted via teleconferencing.

The Graduate Chair (or her/his nominated representative) shall chair the oral examination. The entire oral examination usually takes about one to two hours. It comprises an oral presentation followed by an oral defense and open discussion. The oral presentation should take between 15 to 20 minutes. The student are required to address the key criticism raised in the written reports, particularly:

- (a) The central arguments of the thesis and their connection to the research objectives;
- (b) Key findings and new contributions made to the field;
- (c) Justifications of the methodological and theoretical frameworks used; and
- (d) Implications of study for future research, policy and other applications.

The students should not attempt to rehash the entire thesis, but rather to focus on issues, questions and criticisms raised in the written reports.

The students are expected to answer satisfactorily any questions posted by the oral panel on the subject matter of the research thesis and related subjects.

Advisors are allowed to be present at the oral examination as observers only and cannot participate in the presentation and Question and Answer (Q&A). After the student's presentation and Q&A, the examination panel may consult with the advisor regarding any questions before making their final recommendation.

The Department will convey to the students the results of the oral examination, any recommendation for amendments and typographical changes. Students will need to revise their thesis in consultation with their advisor(s) within the time limit set by the examiners.

If any serious doubts arise as a result of the oral examination, a review and re-writing of the thesis after further study and research will be recommended.

3.12 Proposed Ph.D. programme plan

Semester 1	(a) Complete 2-3 modules (b) Find Thesis Advisor
Semester 2	(a) Complete 2-3 modules (b) Form Ph.D. Thesis Committee
Semester 3	(a) Complete 2-3 modules (b) Read SC6770 Graduate Research Seminar (c) Prepare and submit the first CE
Semester 4	(a) Complete all remaining modules (b) Prepare and clear DERC (c) Prepare and submit the second CE (d) Prepare and defend proposal (QE) by the end of the second year (e) Prepare and submit fieldwork funding through GRSS (if applicable)
Semester 5 – 6	(a) Intensified data collection (including fieldwork, if applicable)
Semester 7 – 8 onwards	(a) Writing and submission of thesis (b) Oral Examination (c) Throughout the candidature, students should be regularly attending the student-run Graduate Seminar Series and the Department’s seminar series (including campus visits of job candidates). They will also make one compulsory paper presentation in the Graduate Seminar Series.

4. Graduate Matters – Others

4.1 DERC / ETHICS Clearance

All research activities after July 2007 require approval by the Department of Ethics Review Committee (DERC) following the requirements set up by the NUS Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS).

Based on NUS IRB's directives and the FASS Ethics Guidelines for Research with Human Subjects (2006), the DERC has two primary objectives:

- a) To assess the level of risk to human subjects in research projects of the Department's academic staff members and students; and
- b) To make recommendations on the appropriate type of ethics review for each research project.

All graduate students will need to apply for ethics clearance to the DERC before they are allowed to engage in data collection. Students should therefore ensure they apply early to respond to further queries the DERC may have (if any) and to avoid any delays in collecting their data.

More details and information about the process involved are available through the sites below:

- a) <https://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/soc/derc.html>
- b) <http://nus.edu.sg/research/irb/derc>

4.2 Fieldwork Funding

Students may apply to the Graduate Research Support Scheme (GRSS) for funding to conduct fieldwork directly related to their M.Soc.Sci. or Ph.D. thesis. Funding limits are set per candidature, varying based on whether the fieldwork is local or overseas, and whether the candidate is a Masters or Doctoral student. Ph.D. candidates must have passed their QE to be eligible for the GRSS grant. Fieldwork should commence only after passing the QE and receiving approval from the DERC.

4.3 Guidelines for Submission of Article-based Ph.D. for Examination of the Doctoral Degree²

- a) PhD students from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (only those pursuing a doctoral degree in the discipline of Sociology) have the OPTION of choosing to submit an article-based PhD thesis as an alternative route to completing a PhD thesis. Only students in subfields of Sociology in which the writing of books is

- less important are advised to take this route in lieu of a monograph thesis.
- b) To pursue an article-based PhD will first require the approval of the Thesis Advisor, followed by the Thesis Committee members, the Graduate Chair, and the Head of Department.
- The approval will be evaluated based on the student's proposed work plan which outlines each article's targeted journal(s), timeline for submission, and authorship/co-authorship.
 - The approval should be based on the best research and publication practices and conventions in the student's respective subfield in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed- methods sociology.
 - The approval should be secured by the end of the student's 5th semester in the PhD program.
- c) Students are required to submit 3 published or publishable articles.
- All 3 articles should be submitted to journals, with justification for the journals chosen for submission and timeline for submission specified. This should be encapsulated in the proposed work plan (see point 2a).
 - The Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee will advise the student in regard to suitable, internationally reputable peer-reviewed journals (IRJs) for publication.
 - The length of each article should be approximately 6,000-8,000 words or as required by targeted journals.
 - At least one of the three articles should be published or formally accepted for publication at the time of submission of the PhD thesis for examination, and the remaining two articles should be submitted for review at targeted IRJs upon the Thesis Advisor's endorsement.
- d) Authorship
- The student must be the lead author for all 3 articles and demonstrate his/her scholarly independence in all of them.
 - Sole-authored articles are strongly encouraged for all three articles. In case of co-authorship, there should be no more than 2 co-authored articles. The Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee will guide the student according to the appropriateness of co- authored articles within their subfield of Sociology.
 - The number of co-authored papers (whether 1 or 2 co-authored papers) should follow the best practices and conventions in the student's subfield and should be endorsed by the Thesis Advisor.
 - For co-authored articles, the article(s) must comprise mostly of the student's work, including conceptualization, theoretical framework, methodology, data analysis, interpretation, and writing. Equal contribution from any of the co-authors is not allowed.
 - The number of co-authors in each co-authored paper should be determined by the Thesis Advisor together with the student according to their subfield's best practices.
 - If there are co-authors for any of the articles, the shared authorship and work done must be duly accounted for.

- For each co-authored paper, the student must prepare a declaration statement that will help assess his/her academic efforts compared to the requirements of a PhD degree. An example is a CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) statement which aims to document detailed description of the student's as well as each co-author's contributions. To prepare such statement, please consult the taxonomy found in the following link.
- e) Given the complexity of co-authorship, students are to discuss with their Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee as early as possible in order to decide how to manage this, before onward submission to the Graduate Chair and HOD for approval.
- f) The student is expected to adhere to these departmental guidelines along with the Faculty guidelines.

² Applicable to the cohort of students who enrol from August 2022 onwards