

Field Statement Requirement¹

Traditional Field Statement and Publishable Paper Option

Ph.D. students are required to complete two field statements in their chosen areas of concentration. Students have the option to complete one of their two field statements as a publishable paper.

The purpose of the field statement is to demonstrate expertise in two established sociological subfields by indicating familiarity with their intellectual roots, developmental trajectories, key concepts, and classical and contemporary debates.

One of the two field statements must be completed as an extended literature review of 20 to 30 pages, double spaced (around 8,000 words). The field statement should demonstrate breadth of knowledge of the specified subfield, as well as depth of knowledge in a key debate or sub-topic within the field. Students should also identify a modest intervention in the field, which may include the use of a particular method, analytic framework, or set of theoretical concepts that the student believes may push the field forward or open up new areas of future research. Students may choose to fulfill both of their field statements using this model.

Students have the option to complete one of their two field statements as a publishable paper. The paper should conform to the specific conventions of a chosen sociological journal, approved by the committee. Although this format will be quite different from a traditional field statement, students writing publishable papers should also be able to demonstrate expertise in an established sociological subfield. Students choosing to fulfill the requirement in this manner must do so with the permission and active involvement of their committee chair and other members. The paper must reflect the student's independent work; papers produced collaboratively or co-authored may not be used to fulfill the field statement requirement.

Students are expected to complete the two field statements after successful completion of the qualifying theory exam and before writing the dissertation proposal – during the academic year or summer terms of years two, three, or four in the program. In the semester that students are planning to complete and defend their field statement, they should register for SOCL 8960: Exam Prep, with the committee chair listed as the course instructor. By the time students register for SOCL 8960, they should have assembled their field statement committee, selected their topic, and completed most of the required reading. Once they register for SOCL 8960, students have one semester to successfully complete and defend their field statement. If the field statement has not been defended by the end of the semester, the student will receive an Incomplete (I) for SOCL 8960 and will be required to write a “completion contract” with their field statement chair. If the exam remains incomplete for two additional semesters, the grade will change to an F. Students will register for SOCL 8960 twice during their academic program.

¹ Revised policy approved faculty meeting on 12/13/18 (15-0-0).

At least one of the two subfields should be in one of the established concentrations of Northeastern University's Sociology & Anthropology Department. The other field statement topic may also be selected from our established concentrations, but it may be another recognized subfield of the discipline. If it is not recognized as an existing section of the American Sociological Association, then students may petition the Graduate Committee for approval of the field statement topic. Students are expected to write field statements in the specific subfields that will be most relevant for their dissertations. The two subfields chosen for field statements must be distinct in order for the student to demonstrate expertise in at least two subfields of sociology.

Field statement committees must be chaired by a full-time faculty member of the Department. The student will work closely with their chair to define the scope of the statement, identify other committee members, and establish a timeline for completion of the field statement. In addition to taking SOCL 8960, students may choose to take a directed study with their field statement chair, however it would likely be more useful to take a directed study in the semester before registering for SOCL 8960. (Students are allowed to take 2 directed studies over the course of their program.)

Chairs of field statement committees are responsible to communicate with students and coordinate with other committee members in a timely manner, to expedite students' successful completion of the written statements and advancement to candidacy. Chairs should be attentive to and communicate scheduling expectations and constraints, including availability during periods off campus and during breaks, with students and other committee members. Generally chairs will be expected to respond to students' work within a 2-week turnaround, if somewhat longer for detailed feedback.

Committees should be comprised of one or two other faculty members in addition to the chair. Students must have three faculty members on one of their field statement committees (chair + 2 additional members) but may have just two faculty members on their other committee (chair + 1 additional member). In addition to the chair, who must be a full-time member of the Sociology & Anthropology Department, one of the additional committee members must also be a member of the department. Students may have faculty members from outside the department (but within the university) on their committee as a third committee member. Deviations from the stated committee composition (including requests for fewer than the specified number of members or inclusion of faculty from outside of the department) can only be made with a successful petition to the Graduate Committee.

All field statements must be defended by the student at an oral defense attended by each member of the committee (either in person or virtually) by the end of the semester in which they have registered for SOCL 8960. While oral defenses are not required to be public, students may invite classmates or other faculty members with the permission of the committee. An oral defense should last one and two hours. The purpose of the oral defense is for the student to articulate the key concepts and debates identified in the written field statement or publishable

paper, as well as to defend the arguments made. The student should also be able to answer questions from the committee members and discuss how they will build on this work in their anticipated dissertation. At the end of the oral defense, the student will be asked to leave while the committee members confer about whether the student performed at a passable level on both the written and oral component in order for the field statement.

Students should bring to the oral defense a printed copy of the "[Field Statement Defense Results](#)" form, with the top part completed. Upon successful completion of the field statement, committee members will sign the form and the student will return it to the Graduate Program Administrator in order to get the Graduate Director's signature and to be included in their file.

Upon the successful completion of the two field statements, students admitted prior to Fall 2019 will achieve candidacy². These students are expected to defend their dissertation proposal within six months of achieving candidacy. Deviations from this stated policy must be approved by the Graduate Committee.

² Revised 11/5/19 as per University guidelines - Effective Fall 2019, degree candidacy is achieved upon successful completion of a proposal defense.