

## **Field Statement and Dissertation Committee Composition Guidelines**<sup>1</sup>

Field statement and dissertation committee composition is important to ensure that Sociology PhD students receive adequate support and professional development while working on their field statements and dissertations. It is important for Sociology PhD students to be aware of the following guidelines or norms when considering which faculty to ask to serve as members or chairs of field statements and dissertation committees. Please see the faculty website at <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/socant/socant-faculty/> to learn more about the research interests and ranks of department faculty to assess their fit for serving on committees and in what roles (e.g. chair, member.)

- **Distinctions in Faculty Rank:**

- **Tenured faculty** (Associate or Full Professor with Tenure) **generally serve as chairs** of field statement and dissertation committees. **Chairs** are generally responsible for working closely with PhD students to meet the intellectual demands of the field statement and dissertation processes. Chairs meet regularly with students to discuss and provide feedback on the key elements of the field statement, dissertation proposal, and dissertation chapters at each stage of development. Chairs and the student also coordinate as needed with other committee members about the students' progress, providing feedback on specific topics in which other members have expertise, and to determine readiness for the defense of field statements, dissertation proposals, and dissertations.

- Co-chairing committees: Having co-chairs for field statement and dissertation committees may be allowed in certain circumstances if such an arrangement will help students be more successful in completing their field statements, dissertation proposals, and dissertations. Ideally, the co-chairs are generally tenured faculty, but co-chairing between one tenured and one pretenure faculty member may be allowed. If the student cannot find a tenured faculty member with sufficient overlap in research expertise on a field statement or dissertation topic, but can find a pretenure faculty member who does, co-chairing may be suitable. However, the co-chair who works more closely with the student will be the tenured faculty member. Students who want to have co-chairs for their committees **must** obtain prior approval from the graduate committee.

- Other tenured faculty who are committee members also work closely with students as needed. **It is important for students to connect with and coordinate communication between all committee members** to ensure everyone is on the same page about effectively supporting the student and working toward relevant deadlines for field statements, dissertation proposals, and dissertations.

- **Pretenure faculty** (Assistant or Associate Professors without tenure) **generally do not serve** as chairs of field statement and dissertation committees.<sup>4</sup> The rationale is that serving as a chair is a significant time commitment and pretenure faculty are typically protected from commitments to focus on their research and other related activities that are important for earning tenure. Pretenure faculty **generally**

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by GC 2/12/25

**serve as members** of field statement and dissertation committees, which allows them to be involved in Sociology PhD students' research and professional development while also observing and learning how to manage facilitation of the committee work from the Senior Faculty Chair of such committees. This is important so that once pretenure faculty obtain tenure, they will understand how to effectively serve as chairs of field statement and dissertation committees. Students who want to have pretenure faculty serve as chairs for their committees **must** obtain prior approval from the graduate committee.

- **Distinctions between Sociology and Anthropology Faculty for Field Statement and Dissertation Committee Composition**
  - As our department has a Sociology PhD program, it is important that all field statement and dissertation committees **have at least one Sociology** faculty member. This will ensure appropriate professional development and learning the norms of the discipline of Sociology for academic writing as well as preparation for the job market as a Sociologist.
- **Tenured Anthropology Faculty** have discretion in choosing but are not required to serve as chairs of field statement and dissertation committees for Sociology PhD students.