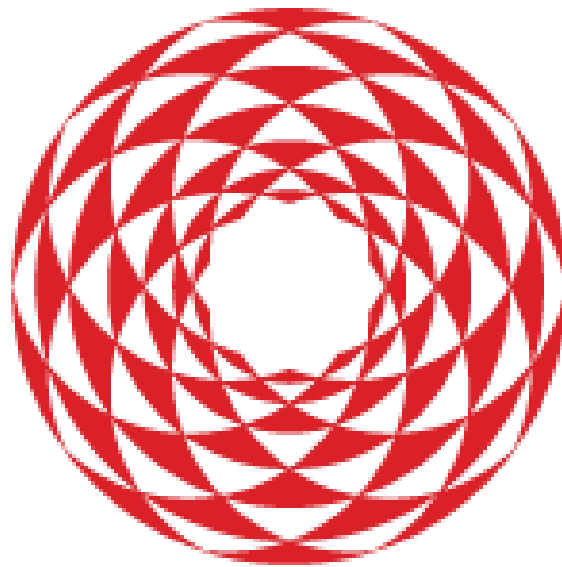


# **Sociology and Anthropology PhD Handbook**



**ASHOKA**  
UNIVERSITY

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS**

**Monsoon 2022**

## **PhD in Sociology/Anthropology**

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology builds on the unique relationship between sociology and social anthropology as it has developed and flourished over time. We emphasise the critical empiricism, theoretical engagement and comparative approach central to our best disciplinary traditions. Our department encourages interdisciplinary explorations with allied fields of social thought and inquiry, including history, economics, political science, psychology, philosophy, linguistics, environmental studies, computer science, planning and design, natural sciences, arts and aesthetics, law and media.

The department introduced a doctoral programme in the academic year 2021-22. In training doctoral students as professional sociologists/anthropologists, the programme seeks to provide them with the necessary analytical tools to become researchers equipped to deliver critical interventions across a range of public institutions – the university, media, think tanks and advocacy work in NGOs, and as lead fieldworkers for market research and corporate social responsibility.

Students may enter the PhD programme after an MA in sociology, social/cultural anthropology or an allied discipline. The doctoral programme will run for five years with a possibility of a sixth-year extension. The first two years will be spent doing course work, and in the preparation and defence of a project proposal and a pilot study of fieldwork. Students are expected to complete their qualifying exams and proposal defense by the end of their second year, commence fieldwork in their third year, and write up their dissertation in their fourth and fifth, and if necessary, sixth year. Students are expected to defend their dissertation no later than their sixth year.

### **Coursework:**

Requirements for completing the PhD include 36 credits of coursework spread over two years. The first three semesters will consist of full-time course-work and the fourth semester will be spent in preparation for the qualifying exam. The PhD course structure is designed to allow students to explore a wide range of concepts, theories and ethnographies as they move towards formulating their dissertation topic.

Graduate students will sign up for a minimum of 12 credits per semester - 3 courses of 4 credits each. The full load of coursework includes 3 core courses that are compulsory for all graduate students and 4 elective courses. Among the 4 elective courses, students may take upto a maximum of 2 independent study modules (ISM) with a willing faculty member of their choosing. The proposal writing and qualifying exam will count for 4 credits each.

In the summer after the first year, students will carry out a pilot study, i.e. a preliminary exploration of their field site. They will submit a report to their supervisor at the beginning of the second year

The Anthropology/Sociology PhD Program at Ashoka will be distinguished by close faculty attention to student writing practices across multiple stages of the PhD. Related to, and in addition to, training in the discipline, students will receive dedicated writing instruction and mentorship.

### **Graduate Assistantship:**

PhD students at Ashoka University are addressed as graduate assistants (GA) in order to distinguish them from other teaching assistants/teaching fellows in the university employment. Each graduate student will be expected to carry out teaching responsibilities during their graduate career. The university guidelines specify that a GA will have to carry out a minimum of two GA-ships in two courses over the span of the PhD programme but are expected to engage as much as possible in teaching responsibilities. The department recommends that the students undertake one GA-ship after completing fieldwork. GAs are also expected to fully participate and help in coordinating the department colloquium series and other academic events.

### **Faculty Supervisor:**

In the beginning of the third semester (Monsoon semester of the second year), each student will choose a faculty supervisor. This should be the faculty member with whom the student feels most compatible both intellectually and personally. Normally, up to two supervisors may jointly supervise a PhD student. At least one supervisor should be from the department in which the student is admitted, while the co-supervisor, if any, may be from the same or another department.

Students are free to change their supervisor(s) at any time to a faculty member who has agreed to work with them. Students can consult with their supervisor on their course selections and on their research and career plans.

### **Student Research Committee (SRC):**

Ashoka University mandates the formation of a Student Research Committee (SRC) in keeping with UGC guidelines. The SRC for each individual student will be appointed by the Head of the Department before the student plans to defend his/her project proposal. It will include as members: (a) the student's supervisor as chair of the committee (b) co-supervisor, if any, or (c) two faculty members who specialize in the related area, one of whom could be from a different department, or, if needed, from outside the university. The SRC will be composed of at least three members out of which at least two, including the Chair, have to be from Sociology and Anthropology, and at most, one, can be from outside the university.

By the end of the third semester, the names of the SRC members should be communicated to the Head of the Department. The primary role of SRC is to periodically monitor progress of the student, help overcome problems, and assess his/her dissertation before it is sent for evaluation by external examiners.

### **Qualifying Exams and Dissertation Proposal Defence:**

In the fourth semester (i.e. Spring semester of the second year), students are expected to take their qualifying examinations and defend their project proposal in the department, after which they will commence their dissertation fieldwork and writing. The candidate must satisfy the SRC regarding the requisite language competence to carry out fieldwork.

Students will prepare two essays for the qualifying exam, one on a conceptual topic and the second, on the fieldwork region. The thematic and bibliographies for the essays will be developed by students in consultation with their committee members. The final essays should be between 25 and 30 pages and demonstrate mastery of the important debates in their field. Upon approval by the committee, students must circulate their essays at least two weeks before the date of the oral examination/viva voce.

During the viva voce, students will defend their dissertation proposals which would also have to be circulated two weeks before the date of oral examination. It is expected that students will receive the all but dissertation (ABD) status after the successful completion of their qualifying examination and may proceed to their dissertation research.

Prior to the exam, students are expected to have completed all coursework and language training requirements.

### **Dissertation Research:**

From the fifth semester (i.e.. Monsoon semester of the third year) each student will carry out fieldwork until the fourth year. During their fieldwork, students will submit a report every three months to the members of their committee.

### **Dissertation Writing:**

The fourth and fifth years will be spent in writing the thesis. Dissertation defence is expected to take place no later than the end of the sixth year. After students return from their fieldwork, they will spend a year 'writing the field'. They will address the key anthropological and sociological question of how ethnographies are written. Students are expected to read a range of carefully selected ethnographies, as well as texts about ethnographic writing in consultation with their supervisor. They will also understand many of the 'genres-along-the-way' that go into making ethnographies — jottings, fieldnotes, reports, visual records, interviews, surveys, and so on — and begin to make sense of, and grapple with all the material that they themselves have collected and generated over the course of their fieldwork year. In a peer and faculty-supported and mentored manner, they will write up their own material, engaging with multiple genres along the way, in an iterative process that culminates in their theses. Students will also examine the genre conventions and relationships, as well as the disjunctures between ethnographic writing, and writing scholarly articles in the field.

### **Academic Standing:**

All students in coursework are required to maintain a minimum GPA of 3, which translates into a grade of B or above. This will be assessed at the end of each academic year. Students can be asked to leave the programme at the end of their first two years on the following grounds:

1. If, at the end of the first two years of course work, the student has less than a minimum GPA of 3.0
2. If a student has outstanding Incompletes. All Incompletes will need to be finished within one semester of the semester in which the course was taken. If a student has an Incomplete at the end of their third semester, then he or she will have to complete that latest by the end of the fourth semester in order to stay in the programme and be eligible for the qualifying exam.
3. With reference to students' dereliction of duty, this includes missing a series of classes without notice, shirking one's responsibility as graduate assistants, missing pre-arranged meetings without notice, and not completing both academic and non-academic assignments.

### **Course Structure and Outline**

<b><u>Semester I</u></b>	<b><u>Core Course</u></b> SOA 6101 Concepts, Contemporaneity and the Social SOA 6102 Critical Writing Workshop	<b><u>Elective</u></b>  Minimum One Elective
<b><u>Semester II</u></b>	SOA 6103 Research Methodology Workshop	Minimum Two Electives
<b>Summer Semester</b>  Pilot Study		

<b><u>Semester III</u></b>	Proposal Writing	Minimum One Elective
<b><u>Semester IV</u></b>	Qualifying Exam	
<b><u>Semester V</u></b>	Fieldwork	
<b><u>Semester VI</u></b>	Fieldwork	
<b><u>Semester VII</u></b>	Fieldwork/Dissertation writing	
<b><u>Semester VIII</u></b>	Fieldwork/Dissertation writing	
<b><u>Semester IX</u></b>	Dissertation writing	
<b><u>Semester X</u></b>	Dissertation writing/Defence	
<b><u>Semester XI</u></b>	Dissertation writing (If extension granted)	
<b><u>Semester XII</u></b>	Dissertation writing/ Defence (If extension granted)	

## **CORE COURSES - 4 credits each**

### **Concepts, Contemporaneity and the Social**

This course will school students into how contemporary sociology/anthropology carves out its objects of study. Part of this carving extends the classical canon, but also differs significantly from it. The course will introduce contemporary debates and ethnographies ranging from the ecological crisis to contemporary religiosity and the problems of the secular, from collective violence to public health, from gift economies to commodity cultures and the market. In the process of study, the course will draw the links between specific concepts and their theoretical moorings, showing how the history of the discipline continues to challenge itself by drawing new boundaries.

### **Critical Writing Workshop**

In the first semester, all students will participate in a critical writing workshop. This workshop will introduce them to argumentative and rhetorical practices within academic writing, addressing questions of genre, structure, reasoning, evidence, citation and style. Students will both understand how and why texts are constructed in particular ways, as well as write ‘practice pieces’ along the lines of multiple “actually-existing” genres — from book reviews to literature reviews. They will receive detailed feedback — both instructor feedback, and written peer-review — on the same. The approach to writing is not, however, merely imitative, but rather genealogical and critical. What are identifiable writing conventions within different disciplines? How did we come to those particular genre conventions? How have they changed with time? In what ways can these conventions be questioned and approached differently? Students will emerge with the beginnings of a meta-cognitive and rhetorical understanding of academic writing, broadly conceived. Writing will continue to be addressed and discussed both in subsequent core and elective courses in our department.

### **Research Methodology**

This is a required course in the second year of graduate study, after completing pre-dissertation pilot study in the summer of the first year. Students will be trained in anthropological methods tailored to specific research projects as well as writing proposals for external funding. The heart of this course will show how the discipline is made and critiqued in the process of ethnographic fieldwork. Attention will also be focused on how the archive functions as a classificatory and technological system of power.

## **ELECTIVE COURSES - 4 credits each**

**Elective courses include but are not limited to the following list. The list is representative and may change to accommodate student interests.**

### **Imagining South Asia**

This course will look at how South Asia as a region has been conceived in anthropological traditions of scholarship. Rather than view South Asia as framed by geography alone, we track transformations in how the region is re-imagined through academic debates in ways that generate both data and concepts. Instead of working with the constraint of the boundaries of the nation state, we will outline a cultural cartography that transacts caste solidarities, linguistic affinities and repertoires of violence that connect the regions of one nation state to that of another. A major concern will be to analyse the link of nationalism and populism across the Subcontinent.

### **Power, Resistance and Legitimacy**

This course will explore the political, regulatory and imaginative practices of state and non-state forms of authority and enforcement, as well as their undoing in relation to anthropological thought.

### **Kins and Neighbours**

Human beings are enmeshed in networks not of their own choosing –networks made up of family, friends, neighbours, strangers, environments and other forms of life. This makes us who we are. This course will work through the way we use our bodies; how we arrived at who we are; what our communities, families, and other groups look like – all of this comes about in and through these networks combining with things beyond us. These networks take on different patterns across history and across geography, and they shape the possibilities of what it means to be human.

### **Economy, Ecology and Infrastructure**

This course will examine the politics, practices and media of cultural and material exchanges. Attending to the entanglements between human and non-human worlds, it will interrogate the role of economic, ecological and technological horizons in the generation of value, the creation of social bonds and their variations.

### **Medicine, Technology and the Body**

This course will study the ways in which models of affliction, therapy, death, sex and bodily experience are embedded, understood and transformed in distinct social and cultural worlds in ways that foster dialogue between scientific intervention, medical technologies and anthropology.



## **Language, Science and the Social**

This course will examine new understandings of how power intersects with knowledge in past and contemporary societies. Moving from semiotic systems of communication and exchange, the course will show how structures of signification incorporate and are altered by webs of meaning that allow for the emergence of ‘facts’ and ‘norms’, thereby interrogating the production of the normal by showing how this emergence relies on technical expertise.

## **Gender & Sexuality**

The course focuses on gender and sexuality as arenas for structuring, challenging, and transforming social relatedness, through the analytical examination of their production in the domains of law, work, kinship and science.

## **Gaze, Screen & Performativity**

The aim of this course is to introduce students to critical concepts of spectatorship with an understanding that “performance” is not always a simple or self-evident term. It will study performances as exceeding the sum of histories, scripts and cast members, and the relations between spectatorship and social contingencies that produce and transform the meanings of performance and the construction of narratives.

## **Law and Society**

The course will examine the cross-cultural facets of changing laws and legal institutions in the context of an increasingly transnational legal, economic, technological and social world. Some of the questions addressed include how laws and legal institutions are made, used and reshaped; how legal norms, actors and institutions affect the everyday life and the cultural fabric of society; and with what effect actors come to be embedded in transnational personal, religious or economic relations as they negotiate between the plurality of norms and institutions.

## **Constructing Disciplinary Pasts**

This course examines the ways in which the history of social theory and disciplinary pasts of anthropology and sociology have been conceived at different moments and global locations. Rather than taking the idea of a canon as given, this course invites students to consider what constitutes enduring texts and questions in social theory, how intellectual influences and imperatives move across generations and geographical locations, and the vantage points from which disciplinary histories are constructed or reconstructed. Instead of an overview, this course seeks to closely re-inhabit particular moments, texts, and trajectories, and to ask how those histories, tensions and forms of illumination remain alive in the present.

### **Proposal Writing - 4 credits**

In their third semester (i.e. Spring semester of the second year), students prepare to write two area-essays for their qualifying exams, as well as develop their research proposals. After receiving writing-related mentorship across courses in the programme in their first year, they will spend a month closely reading a series of carefully selected essays and articles that address the genre in which they are expected to write their exam: the essay. Through beginning to understand the essay as an evolving genre, and its genealogy, and then reading 'classic' and contemporary essays in the discipline of anthropology and sociology, as well as literature reviews, and annual review essays, they will emerge with an understanding of myriad ways to structure a comprehensive essay in the field. They will begin to write their exam essays through an iterative process of drafting and revision and will also write in a number of related genres, including annotated bibliographies, abstracts, and proposals. Faculty feedback, structured peer review, drafting and revision are central to this course. Students are encouraged to workshop among themselves their ideas and proposals in progress. A first draft of the proposal will be due in October of the second year of graduate study. The proposal writing and preparation for dissertation proposal defence count for 4 credits. Please note that proposal writing is not a course but a semester long research activity.

### **Qualifying Exam and Dissertation Proposal Defence - 4 credits**

Students will write two essays as part of their qualifying exam in the fourth semester. They will also defend their dissertation proposal in front of the department faculty. The qualifying exam and proposal defence together count for 4 credits.

### **Admission Requirements:**

Candidates with a background in Sociology or Anthropology or related disciplines, including history and the humanities, and a thorough knowledge of at least one Indian language are encouraged to apply. The minimum requirement to apply is a Master's degree with at least 55% aggregate. Required documents include a cover letter (1 page), resume, research proposal (3-5 pages, including bibliography), and one writing sample (15-20 pages). Candidates will be shortlisted for a written test based on their application materials. Further shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview.

Recommended preparation for the PhD programme: A robust background in sociology or anthropology or related disciplines, including history and the humanities, and a thorough knowledge of at least one Indian language.

### **Timeline of the Admission Process:**

Deadline for Monsoon Admission: February

Resume Requirement: Yes

Research Proposal: Yes 3-5 pages, including a bibliography

Writing Sample: Yes

Writing Sample Number of Pages: 15-20 pages

Degree Programmes: Full Time

### **Fees:**

- Tuition fee: Rs. 12,500 per semester.
- One time admission fee: To be at par with that paid by other students.
- Dissertation assessment fee: Rs. 15,000 for the first time, and Rs. 5,000 the second/third time.
- The quantum of fees paid by PhD students will be reviewed from time to time.

### **Stipend:**

- The monthly stipend paid to all PhD students selected for fellowships funded by Ashoka University will be Rs. 35,000 per month.
- Once PhD students are eligible for Senior Research Fellowship (SRF) after completing the qualifying exam, the university will pay a stipend of Rs. 40,000 per month to each Senior Research Fellow.
- A contingency grant of Rs. 20,000 per annum will be made available to each PhD student.
- The annual contingency grant given to PhD students who receive a scholarship from UGC, CSIR or a partner organization will be decided based on terms of the funding agency.
- The quantum of stipend paid to PhD students will be reviewed periodically.

### **Health Insurance:**

The university provides a health insurance (floater) cover upto Rs 1,00,000 per year.

### **Conference and Professional Development Support:**

Ashoka University offers financial assistance to PhD students for presenting their research ideas/findings in reputed international conferences. This facility can be availed once by each PhD student. Maximum amount of aid is Rs. 2,00,000/-

### **Leave Policy:**

According to university guidelines, PhD research scholars are entitled to a maximum of 30 days of leave per academic year. Researchers are also eligible for maternity/paternity leave, medical leave, etc. as per government norms.

Any academic activity outside the university (as needed for the PhD academic structure) to carry out fieldwork, library work, computational work, experimental work, research work, attending conferences and courses, etc. are considered part of the PhD program and not counted as leave of absence.

PhD scholars may be granted leave (if applicable) with the approval of the supervisor on condition that all research and teaching activities can be maintained as per the decided plans.

### **FAQs**

1. Would we need IRB clearance for our Summer pilot? If yes, please advise on steps.

Answer. You will need to apply for IRB review. Read the instructions [here](#).

2. Do we need to undergo ethics training at any stage? If yes, when would that be?

Answer. You need to have completed a certified ethics course before applying for IRB approval. Details about the course can be found [here](#).

3. Do/Should we have a Plan of Study (POS)-type document for each of us that we fill out and get cleared as we enter each semester? Or does a similar feature already exist on AMS?

Answer: No system of PoS but a system of evaluation (self-evaluation + faculty evaluation) after each academic year will be in place to measure the progress of each candidate. Candidates will be given a form for self-evaluation and will also get a letter from the department outlining their progress and areas needing further improvement.

A provisional supervisor will be assigned to each incoming student, based on research fit/student preference, and the student may discuss various matters related to plan of study, proposal writing, pilot study etc. with the provisional supervisor. The student will list the provisional supervisor as their supervisor in official forms while registering for the Ph.D. programme in their first year. The student and provisional supervisor may choose to continue or terminate their mentor-mentee relationship at the end of one year, or until the formal registration of the Ph.D. supervisor takes place in the third semester of graduate study.

4. If we would like to take graduate electives in other departments, how do we confirm whether the specific course(s) chosen are eligible to be counted towards our electives requirements? Email confirmation with HoD/Signatures on above POS-style document/Any other method?

Answer: Any elective course of 3000 level and above will be counted towards PhD elective requirement. These courses can be chosen from those offered by the SOA department or by other departments. Both graduate and undergraduate/ASP courses in other departments will be counted. Students who do not have a background in sociology and anthropology are strongly encouraged to opt for 3000 or 2000 level electives within the department as their electives.

5. If we do take up GA-ship twice, do we have the provision to do one for an elective and one from the foundation course?

6. Given that GA-ship is intense, can we do two courses plus GAship in one semester? Instead of the required 3?

Answer to questions 5&6: The Graduate Assistant (GA) policy was reviewed, and a major change made in April 2022. The department recommends that students need to undertake one GA-ship in their graduate career. In order to adequately carry out GA responsibilities, students need to have completed basic training in sociology and anthropology. Additionally, the proposal-writing and fieldwork experience will add to the intellectual maturity of the student. Hence, it was decided that the requirement of working as a GA should be fulfilled AFTER fieldwork during the writing-up stage. Students are encouraged to be on campus during the dissertation writing stage. Students are also advised to do their GA-ship in a core SOA course (SOA 1101, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104).

Please note that any student found lacking in discharging their GA-ship duties will be regarded as having an Incomplete GA-ship and will be asked by the department to repeat their GA-ship in another semester.

Please also note while the university requires graduate students to complete two semesters as a GA, the department requires only ONE semester as a GA. The second can be optional.

7. Could we have a policy on ISMs? Could professors be incentivised to take ISMs by providing them benefits/credits for the same?

Answer: Students are free to approach any faculty for ISMs, but please note that ISMs require additional teaching hours from faculty for which they do not get teaching credit.

8. What is the policy if the supervisor leaves? Can they continue as supervisor or will we have to find other options?

Answer: The outgoing supervisor will ensure that the student will be assigned a new supervisor. The outgoing supervisor can also co-supervise the student after all the required formalities are completed and approval is secured for the co-supervision.

9. Can we have more courses for MLS + PhD students?

Answer: Please see answer to question 4.

10. Is there a possibility of designing a course with inputs from the professors and the cohort so that it appeals to the diverse areas of research of the cohort?

Answer: Please see answer to question 4.

Additional response to few follow-up questions,

a) There will be two proposal writing workshops held in the third and fourth semesters respectively. Each workshop of two-three days duration will be conducted by department faculty or invited faculty guests from outside the department. Students will need to have a first draft of their proposal ready before 15 October of the Monsoon semester, and the second, revised draft ready by 15 March of the Spring semester.

b) According to the handbook, the SRC (student research committee) will be composed of 3-4 faculty members. There can be one primary supervisor or two co-supervisors, and two other faculty, one of which can be from outside the department or in any educational institute outside India.

**Contact:**

In case you have any further questions or concerns, you can contact:

- Dr Katy Hardy, Head of Department  
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- Dr Swargajyoti Gohain, Ph.D. Coordinator  
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- Pratima Kadian, Department Manager  
pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in

In case you have questions regarding registration, financial aid, or research grant related issues, you can contact Gunisha Dhawan of the Research and Development Office

[scholar.management@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:scholar.management@ashoka.edu.in)