

Social Work, Ph.D.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in social work prepares students to conduct research that contributes to the knowledge base of social work, to become leaders in the profession, and to teach social work in postsecondary educational institutions.

Students are required to earn 82 s.h. to earn the degree. Those who enter the program with a M.S.W. are granted 30 s.h. credit; they must complete an additional 52 s.h. for the degree. Individuals with master's degrees in related disciplines (for example, psychology or sociology) may choose to earn a Ph.D. in social work without first earning the M.S.W. Credit from a related master's degree may be applied to the Ph.D. degree program, as determined by the School of Social Work.

Students complete required course work, research, and teaching practicums; pass a comprehensive exam; write a dissertation; and defend it in an oral exam. Their work includes courses in one of four outside disciplines—sociology, psychology, public health, or education—to assist them in preparation for the comprehensive examination and dissertation defense.

Individualized and Interdisciplinary Curriculum

The program allows students to develop a coherent program of study with opportunities to pursue their own scholarly interests. These interests are pursued through a core social work curriculum, a concentration (sociology, psychology, education or public health) and a social work focal area (e.g., family violence). Students may take focal area courses in any college or department at the University of Iowa. The median time to complete the degree is four years.

The School of Social Work provides a supportive environment with substantial opportunities for mentoring and interaction with faculty members. Throughout Ph.D. studies at the University of Iowa, the school assists students in developing a program of study based on their unique educational and career goals. There are many opportunities to work closely with faculty members in a mentoring environment. In the first year, students complete a mentored research practicum with a faculty member and a mentored in-class teaching experience. During the second year, students choose a faculty member to guide them through the comprehensive examination and dissertation process.

Admission

To ensure that all doctoral students receive mentoring, the School of Social Work typically admits three or four students annually; approximately 35 percent of applicants are admitted.

Admission Requirements

Students are required to have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, and a minimum undergraduate g.p.a. of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale).

For applicants who took the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test prior to August 1, 2011, a score of at least 575

for the verbal and quantitative sections or a composite score of at least 1150 is preferred. For applicants who took the revised GRE after July 2011, a score of 155 for the verbal and quantitative sections or a composite score of at least 310 is preferred.

Students should have completed an introductory statistics course (including graphing techniques for presenting data, descriptive statistics, correlation, introduction to regression, prediction, logic of statistical inference, elementary probability models, estimation and tests of significance) with a grade of B or higher. Research methods courses taken in a M.S.W. program typically do not meet the criteria for an introductory statistics course. Applicants who have not taken an introductory statistics course must complete one before beginning the M.S.W./Ph.D. or the Ph.D. program. Under unusual circumstances, a highly qualified applicant may be conditionally admitted into the program without a statistics course, if they have a high score on the quantitative section of the GRE or if they have taken other mathematics courses. Regardless, applicants still must successfully complete an introductory statistics course the spring or summer semester prior to beginning the M.S.W./Ph.D. or the Ph.D. program.

International applicants must score at least 100 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) iBT total score or at least 7.0 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) overall band score, with no IELTS subscore less than 6.0. A score of 26 on the speaking portion of the TOEFL is preferred. Automatic waivers of the TOEFL or IELTS requirement are granted for applicants who have completed a baccalaureate or more advanced degree from an accredited university in the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada (excluding French Quebec), English-speaking Africa, Australia, or New Zealand.

Applicants applying only to the Ph.D. program are required to have a M.S.W. or a master's degree in a related field, such as public policy, public health, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, education, nursing, or anthropology.

Admission and Selection Process

Applications are accepted beginning September 1 for the following academic year; applications are due February 1. Admission decisions are made in February. Typically, all applications are evaluated on the same day. Applicants are notified, in writing, of the decision by April 1. In some years, there may be a waiting list. If applicants are placed on the waiting list, they are notified of this decision by April 1.

The school evaluates applicants based on their potential to independently conduct and disseminate scholarship that contributes to policy or practice and on their potential to prepare students to educate future social workers. Occasionally, an applicant who has been declined is encouraged to reapply in a subsequent year.

Financial Support

The School of Social Work provides full-time students with a competitive, multi-year financial package (full tuition, an assistantship, a health and dental insurance allowance). It also provides fellowships, travel awards and dissertation awards.

In addition to funding provided by the School of Social Work, applicants may be eligible for financial assistance through the Graduate College, other departments at the University of Iowa, and organizations outside the University. The director of the Ph.D. program works with students to identify sources of

funding, and the Division of Sponsored Programs as well as a student's mentor helps the student apply for external funding.

The Graduate College awards fellowships to incoming students, dissertation-year fellowships, summer fellowships, and travel awards. The School of Social Work applies to the Graduate College to secure these awards at the time applicants are selected into the program. The Graduate College website contains a complete list of awards.

Career Advancement

According to the National Association of Social Workers, there is no better time to consider furthering one's education and obtaining a doctorate. Increasingly, there are more openings for social work faculty than there are graduates of Ph.D. programs. To learn more about the academic job market, see the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) career center. The CSWE posts jobs year round, although most new ads for teaching and research positions are posted between August and November.

Graduates become leaders in education, research, and government. All of the Ph.D. graduates from the University of Iowa's School of Social Work program have obtained employment within one year of graduation. Of these, about 75 percent of graduates obtain teaching or research positions, and about 25 percent obtain policy, administrative, or practice positions.

To learn more about some of the recent graduates' careers, visit the School of Social Work website.