

Social Work, PhD

Learning Outcomes

Graduates will:

- locate their work in the intellectual landscape of social work;
- critically analyze theories, practices, policies, and research in at least one specialized area of social work knowledge;
- disseminate knowledge that contributes to the advancement of social work research, practice, and policy, including writing publishable, peer-reviewed manuscripts; presenting at local, national, or international conferences; and/or producing policy briefs or white papers; and
- in the social work classroom, create a culture and classroom climate that promotes learning of all students.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in social work requires 78 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.00. Students complete the required coursework, research, and teaching practicum; 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 prepare for the comprehensive examination and dissertation.

The doctoral program 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.

Those who enter the program with a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree are granted 30 s.h. credit; they must complete an additional 48 s.h. for the PhD. Individuals with master's degrees in related disciplines (for example, psychology or sociology) may choose to earn a PhD in social work without first earning the MSW. Credit from a related master's degree may be applied to the PhD degree program, as determined by the School of Social Work.

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 methods and electives in any college or department at the University of Iowa.

The School of Social Work provides a supportive environment with substantial opportunities for mentoring and interaction with faculty members. Throughout PhD 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 two years, 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 processes.

Graduate Education

Graduate education prepares students with advanced knowledge and skills in specialized fields. At the University of Iowa, the Graduate College advocates for student-centered graduate education and supports equitable application of rules and policies across graduate programs.

Academics

University of Iowa graduate credentials are regulated by policies and requirements found in the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations. This includes minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirements for academic standing and degree conferral. The Graduate College sets the minimum requirement. Individual graduate programs may establish higher GPA requirements.

Admissions

Graduate student applicants must meet admission requirements for both the Graduate College and the program to which they have applied. University of Iowa graduate admission requirements are published by the Graduate College and on the Graduate Admissions website.

Financial Support

Graduate students might be eligible for financial support. Several contingencies apply, including degree program and award type, satisfactory progress toward degree, satisfactory completion of all duties related to an appointment, and availability of funding. Graduate students should inquire directly with their program for more information about funding availability. The Graduate Student Employment Standards govern the employment relationship between the University of Iowa and all graduate teaching and research assistants in all matters except wages, which are covered by an existing collective bargaining agreement or the conditions of an applicable federal grant.

Admission

To ensure that all doctoral students receive mentoring, the School of Social Work typically admits three or four students annually; approximately 35% 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 grade-point average of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale).

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 Master of Social Work (MSW) 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 program.

Applicants applying only to the PhD program are required to have an MSW 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 Sept. 1 for the following academic year; applications are due by Feb. 1. Admission decisions are made in February. Applicants are notified in writing of the decision by April 1. In some years, there may be a waiting list.

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 future social workers.

Career Advancement

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

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 December.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

Social Work, PhD

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
78 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; maximum of 30 s.h. of graduate transfer credits from master's allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. ^{a, b}		
Hours		0
First Year		
Fall		
Arrange Teaching Practicum		
CLAS:5100	Practicum: College Teaching and Professional Development for Teaching Assistants	1
SSW:7800	Social Work Proseminar	1
SSW:7806	Teaching Practicum	2
Concentration Theory course ^c		3
Statistics Level 2 course ^c		3
Hours		10
Spring		
Arrange Research Practicum		
Select Doctoral Committee Chair		
Concentration Elective course ^c		3
Concentration Theory course ^c		3

Statistics Level 3 course ^c		3
Hours		9
Summer		
SSW:7803	Social Work Research Practicum	3
Hours		3
Second Year		
Fall		
Finalize Comprehensive Committee Members		
SSW:7810	Conducting a Systematic Literature Review	3
Concentration Research Methods course ^c		3
Elective course ^c		3
Hours		9
Spring		
Comprehensive Exam Preparation and Proposal Defense ^{d, e}		
Statistics Level 4 or Research Methods course ^c		3
Elective course ^c		3
Hours		6
Summer		
Submit Comprehensive Exam Paper		
Hours		0
Third Year		
Fall		
Exam: Doctoral Comprehensive Exam		
SSW:7804	Thesis Writing Seminar	3
SSW:7830	PhD Dissertation	2
Hours		5
Spring		
Dissertation Prospectus and Defense ^f		
SSW:7830	PhD Dissertation	2
Hours		2
Fourth Year		
Fall		
SSW:7830	PhD Dissertation	2
Hours		2
Spring		
SSW:7830	PhD Dissertation	2
Exam: Doctoral Final Exam ^g		
Hours		2
Total Hours		48

a Includes required graduate coursework, dissertation hours and 9 s.h. of elective coursework beyond the 30 s.h. transferred from the master's; work with faculty advisor to determine coursework and sequence.

b Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

c Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate coursework; see the department website and the Social Work PhD Handbook for specifics.

d Written comps proposal due second year spring; written comprehensive exam due second year summer; oral comprehensive exam due third year fall.

e Schedule oral comprehensive exam for third year fall.

f Proposal and defense with full committee completed in third year spring.

g Dissertation defense.