Master of Social Work, MSW

The Master of Social Work (MSW) program prepares social workers for leadership in the profession and for advanced social work practice in a wide range of settings. Students choose from two advanced concentrations, both of which allow students to develop advanced skills to work with families and communities and advocate for social change. The two concentrations of the program, currently family-centered practice and integrated practice, teach students knowledge and skills to work with children, adults, older adults, families, small groups, organizations, and communities.

The program provides students the opportunity to develop the competencies necessary for leadership in addressing the unique challenges of the state of Iowa, including a large proportion of older adults, recent immigrants to rural communities, and rural poverty.

The program has been continually accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1951. See the CSWE Assessment of Learning Outcomes for the MSW program on the School of Social Work website.

Master in Social Work Program Options

Options are available to complete the MSW full-time or part-time in Iowa City and Des Moines, with applications reviewed annually. The Quad Cities program (located in the Davenport/Bettendorf area on Iowa's eastern border) and the Sioux City program are three-year, part-time programs to which students are admitted every three years. The hybrid (online) option is also a three-year cohort model, with applications reviewed every two years. Applicants to any of the options, at any of the centers, complete the same application, with one additional essay required of the online applicants.

Regular Standing (54 s.h. Option)

Designed for individuals who have completed a degree in a discipline other than a CSWE-accredited social work degree program. Applicants apply for fall admission; the deadline is Feb. 1.

Advanced Standing (36 s.h. Option)

Designed for individuals who have completed the BA in social work or the BSW from a CSWE-accredited social work degree program. Applicants apply for summer admission; the deadline is Dec. 1.

MSW Professional Association

Students and graduates of the social work program are eligible for membership in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world with 132,000 members. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. The NASW Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers.

Graduates of accredited MSW programs may be eligible for membership in many specialized areas of practice, for example, associate membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), upon fulfilling certain curriculum requirements at the graduate level. Courses are not automatically accepted; graduates need to demonstrate that specific courses meet the AAMFT's requirements, usually by sending course outlines.

Learning Outcomes

Enduring Understandings

The School of Social Work learning goals are expressed as enduring understandings—concepts that have lasting value beyond the classroom and are applicable to every aspect of social work practice.

- Commitment to advance social justice and fight discrimination and inequity.
- Adherence to a high standard of ethics.
- Using a systemic perspective, understanding the interconnectedness of people and their environments, and the systems in which we operate.
- Critical thinking, where problem solving, creativity, and innovation are as important as learning of facts.
- Self-awareness and effective use of self are crucial to effective relationships at all levels of practice.

MSW Goals

The goals of the MSW program are to:

- prepare students to shape the profession's future by providing education in family-based, community-based, and culturally competent practice approaches using the person-in-environment framework; and
- prepare competent professionals for autonomous practice and leadership within the professional community, including advanced interventions at multiple system levels, supervision, program development, program administration, training, evaluation of practice, dissemination of new models of practice, and policy development.

The curriculum is designed to address the following nine competencies for both generalist and advanced practitioners:

- demonstrate ethical and professional behavior;
- advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice;
- engage anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in practice;
- engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice;
- engage in policy practice engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
- assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
- intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; and
- evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Explore how social workers help individuals, groups, and families across their lifespans on the NASW website.

Requirements

The Master of Social Work requires 54 s.h. of graduate credit or 36 s.h. for students who hold an undergraduate degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Students must maintain a
cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.00 and they must be in compliance with the school's student advancement policy. The degree is offered with or without thesis.

The MSW curriculum is under revision with the generalist courses launched in 2022 and the specialized advanced courses to be launched in 2023.

All MSW students follow a structured sequence of courses and must obtain permission to revise their plan.

Requirements for the 54 s.h. MSW program includes 22 s.h. in generalist courses, 23 s.h. in specialized courses, and a minimum of 9 s.h. in electives. Students complete one semester of generalist practicum and two semesters of specialized practicum. Credit from previous graduate coursework toward the MSW may be applied if specific criteria are met, but students must earn a minimum of 36 s.h. after admission to the MSW program. Full-time programs begin in the fall semester and include a summer session in which electives are offered.

Advanced standing (36 s.h.) students begin their coursework in the summer and may complete the program over one year (three semesters) or two years, following the sequenced plan.

Specializations

The specific mission of the MSW program is to prepare social workers for leadership in the profession and for advanced social work practice in one of two specializations: social work in clinical practice or social work in leadership practice. The clinical practice specialization will prepare students for mental health work with individuals and families in organizations such as nonprofits, hospitals, schools, and private practice.

The leadership practice specialization will prepare students to partner with communities, develop programs, lead organizations, and advocate for social, economic, and racial justice.

The MSW program helps students develop high levels of skill in applying the values and ethics of the social work profession to complex ethical issues. The program has a strong liberal arts focus, and the research mission of the university ensures students learn about faculty research; critical thinking; analytic and scientific ways of thinking; social, economic, and environmental justice; and practice and program evaluation. While students are not required to declare a field of practice, opportunities to specialize are available in fields such as aging, end-of-life care, school social work, child welfare, trauma-informed practice, social work in health and mental health settings, and many others.

The school offers the MSW program on the university's Iowa City campus and at three learning centers: Des Moines, Sioux City (see "MSW Off-Campus Learning Centers" below), and as a hybrid (online) program. Each learning center provides the required structured sequence of courses and includes opportunities for students to individualize their plans of study through electives and practicum experiences.

Full-time study and a four-year, part-time program are available in Iowa City and Des Moines. A three-year sequence of courses is available at all sites, although the Sioux City site only admits entering classes on a three-year cycle. The hybrid program admits students every other year and is a three-year program.

Following are course sequences for full- and part-time 54 s.h. programs, and full- and part-time 36 s.h. programs. Students in the 54 s.h. program complete the generalist courses before advancing to the specialized courses. Students in the 36 s.h. program enter in the summer session, taking two required courses and electives, and then proceed to the specialized courses.

- Two-Year (54 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program
- Three-Year (54 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program in Iowa City and Des Moines Centers
- Four-Year (54 Semester Hour) Part-Time Program
- One-Year (36 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program
- Two-Year (36 Semester Hour) Part-Time Program

**Two-Year (54 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program**

This program is for students who earned a bachelor's degree in a major other than a CSWE-accredited social work program.

**First Year: Generalist Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6100</td>
<td>Thinking Like a Social Worker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6200</td>
<td>Development of Professional Use of Self</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6300</td>
<td>Theory and Skills for Working with Individuals and Families</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSW:6400</td>
<td>Theory and Skills for Working with Organizations and Communities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6500</td>
<td>Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6600</td>
<td>Engaging with Evidence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6700</td>
<td>Generalist Practicum in Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:6701</td>
<td>Generalist Practice Seminar</td>
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**Second Year: Specialization**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7310</td>
<td>Clinical Practice I: Treatment Planning and Intervention</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SSW:7410</td>
<td>Leadership Practice I: Community Relationship Building and Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SSW:7320</td>
<td>Clinical Practice II: Intervention, Evaluation, Termination</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SSW:7420</td>
<td>Leadership Practice II: Policy Analysis and Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SSW:7330</td>
<td>Clinical Practice III: Selected Topics in Clinical Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SSW:7430</td>
<td>Leadership Practice III: Leading Programs and Organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7500</td>
<td>Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7550</td>
<td>Program and Practice Evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SSW:7750</td>
<td>Practicum with Clinical Specialization</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7600</td>
<td>Practicum with Leadership Specialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7601</td>
<td>Clinical Practicum Seminar I</td>
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<tr>
<td>or SSW:7751</td>
<td>Leadership Practicum Seminar I</td>
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</table>

The MSW curriculum is under revision with the generalist courses launched in 2022 and the specialized advanced courses to be launched in 2023.
SSW:7600  Practicum in School Social Work  3-4

**Two-Year (54 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program Electives**
Students complete 9 s.h. in elective coursework. Students receive a tentative plan to complete the program and meet regularly with their faculty advisor about their plan.

**Three-Year (54 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program in Iowa City and Des Moines Centers**
This program is for students who earned a bachelor's degree in a major other than a CSWE-accredited social work program. Contact the School of Social Work for information about the three-year, part-time program offered online in Sioux City and the Quad Cities.

**First Year**
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<td>Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice I</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>SSW:6600</td>
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**Second Year**
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<td>Generalist Practicum in Social Work</td>
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<td>SSW:6701</td>
<td>Generalist Practice Seminar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7500</td>
<td>Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice II</td>
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<td>Clinical Practice I: Treatment Planning and Intervention or Leadership Practice I: Community Relationship Building and Collaboration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7320</td>
<td>Clinical Practice II: Intervention, Evaluation, Termination or Leadership Practice II: Policy Analysis and Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7330 or SSW:7430</td>
<td>Clinical Practice III: Selected Topics in Clinical Practice or Leadership Practice III: Leading Programs and Organizations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7600</td>
<td>Practicum with Clinical Specialization</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SSW:7750</td>
<td>Practicum with Leadership Specialization</td>
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or SSW:7760  Practicum in School Social Work

**Three-Year (54 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program Electives**
Students complete 9 s.h. in elective coursework. Students receive a tentative plan to complete the program and meet regularly with their faculty advisor about their plan.

**Four-Year (54 Semester Hour) Part-Time Program**
This program is for part-time students who earned a bachelor's degree in a major other than a CSWE-accredited social work degree program.

**First Year, Four-Year Part-Time Program**
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<td>SSW:6600</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7500</td>
<td>Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice II</td>
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Fourth Year, Four-Year Part-Time Program

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSW:7550</td>
<td>Program and Practice Evaluation</td>
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<td>Practicum with Clinical Specialization</td>
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<td>or SSW:7750</td>
<td>Practicum with Leadership Specialization</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SSW:7760</td>
<td>Practicum in School Social Work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Four-Year Part-Time Program Electives

Students complete 9 s.h. in elective coursework. Students receive a tentative plan to complete the program and meet regularly with their faculty advisor about their plan.

One-Year (36 Semester Hour) Full-Time Program

This program is for students who earned a BA degree with a major in social work.

Students take a minimum of 4 s.h. in required coursework. In the fall they complete 9 s.h. of required courses and 4 s.h. of practicum and seminar. In the spring, they complete an additional 6 s.h. of required coursework and 4 s.h. of practicum and seminar. Students complete 9 s.h. in elective coursework. Students receive a tentative plan to complete the program and meet regularly with their faculty advisor about their plan.

Two-Year (36 Semester Hour) Part-Time Program

This program is for students who earned a BA degree with a major in social work.

First Year, Two-Year Part-Time Program

Beginning in the summer, students take a minimum of 4 s.h. in required coursework. They take 6 s.h. in the fall and 6 s.h. in the spring of required coursework.

Second Year, Two-Year Part-Time Program

Students take an advanced practicum (3 s.h.) and a seminar (1 s.h.) each semester. They also take a required program/practice evaluation course in the fall.

Electives, Two-Year Part-Time Program

Students complete 9 s.h. in elective coursework. Students receive a tentative plan to complete the program and meet regularly with their faculty advisor about their plan.

MSW Off-Campus Learning Centers

The School of Social Work delivers the MSW curriculum on campus in Iowa City and in two learning centers in Des Moines and Sioux City, Iowa; and as a hybrid (online) program. Each learning center is administered by the School of Social Work in cooperation with Distance and Online Education. Social work faculty members teach required courses at each center and are available for student advising. The off-campus programs have been evaluated by the Council on Social Work Education and the University of Iowa Graduate College as providing a program comparable to that available on the Iowa City campus.

Courses at each off-campus site are taught in classrooms by tenure-track, clinical, lecturers, visiting, and adjunct faculty members. Instructional connections between sites are maintained through varied technologies, including computer-based instruction.

For program entry and application dates, contact the School of Social Work.

Des Moines

The MSW program in Des Moines, in central Iowa, offers courses sequenced to accommodate both part-time and full-time study. Students may complete the entire degree program at the Des Moines center, although they may choose to travel to Iowa City for selected elective courses offered during the summer. Classes are held at the John and Mary Pappajohn Education Center.

Sioux City

The Sioux City part-time program is offered in classroom space at Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa, with additional online asynchronous components.

Hybrid (Online)

The MSW hybrid program is designed for students who live in Iowa or bordering states and who, because of geography or life circumstances, cannot access the Sioux City, Des Moines, or Iowa City learning centers. Students in this program attend evening classes in real time using video conferencing, and asynchronous classes in which coursework is done independently, adhering to deadlines. A mandatory two- or three-day summer institute is held in Iowa City each August. Courses are scheduled over a three-year period.

Combined Programs

Social Work Degree Programs

MSW/PhD in Social Work

The school offers a Master of Social Work/Doctor of Philosophy program in social work for students who have completed coursework in research and statistics and have postbaccalaureate experience related to social work practice. The program permits students to apply a limited amount of credit toward both graduate degrees, reducing the time required to graduate. Individuals must apply to the MSW program and the PhD program; applications are reviewed by the admission panels of both programs. For more information, contact the School of Social Work.

Degree Programs with Other Colleges

The School of Social Work collaborates with other colleges to offer combined degree programs. Each program permits students to apply up to 12 s.h. of graduate credit toward both degrees, reducing the time required to graduate.
Applicants must apply to each program separately and be admitted to each one before they may be admitted to the combined degree program. Information about the combined programs is available from the School of Social Work’s program administrator.

**MSW/JD**

The School of Social Work collaborates with the College of Law to offer the combined Master of Social Work/Juris Doctor programs. For information about the JD, see Juris Doctor, JD (College of Law) in the catalog.

**MSW/MBA (Professional Program)**

The School of Social Work and the Tippie College of Business offer the combined Master of Social Work/Master of Business Administration programs. For more information, see the MBA Professional Program (Tippie College of Business) in the catalog.

**MSW/MS in Urban and Regional Planning**

The School of Social Work along with the School of Planning and Public Affairs offer the combined Master of Social Work/Master of Science in urban and regional planning. For more information, see the MS in urban and regional planning (Graduate College) in the catalog.

**Admission**

The School of Social Work seeks to maintain a heterogeneous student body by enrolling students who represent diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives. Previous experience in human services and cross-cultural experiences is desirable. The school does not grant academic credit for life experience or previous work experience.

Admission to the MSW 54 s.h. program requires a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, with a reasonable distribution of courses in the liberal arts and sciences (the humanities and the social, behavioral, and biological sciences).

Admission to the MSW 36 s.h. program requires a bachelor's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited college or university.

Applicants must have an undergraduate grade-point average (GPA) of 3.00 or higher, or a GPA of 3.00 or higher on 12 s.h. of letter-graded graduate coursework; consult the university's Office of Admissions for assistance in calculating GPA. Competence on personal computers and spreadsheet applications is required.

Applicants whose first language is not English must submit official test scores to verify English proficiency. Applicants can verify English proficiency by submitting official test scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the Duolingo English Test (DET).

Applicants must submit three letters of recommendation, including one regarding academic abilities and one from the applicant's most recent employer (if the employment was social work-related); and a personal statement addressing criteria specified by the School of Social Work.

Applications for the 54 s.h. programs are accepted beginning Sept. 1 and must be completed by Feb. 1 to be considered for the next academic year. Applications for the 36 s.h. program are due Dec. 1.

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

For a complete list of graduate admission policies, contact the School of Social Work.

**Financial Support**

Students seeking financial assistance should apply for aid through the University of Iowa Office of Student Financial Aid. Students may apply for a limited number of research and teaching assistantships available from the School of Social Work. Application materials for research or teaching assistantships are available from the school each spring, or as positions become available. Aid received through the Office of Student Financial Aid does not preclude students from consideration for aid through the School of Social Work.

**Career Advancement**

Professional social workers are found in every facet of community life—in schools, health settings (such as hospitals, hospice, skilled care facilities, substance abuse treatment, mental health clinics), senior centers, elected office, private practices, prisons, military, corporations, and in numerous public and private agencies that serve individuals and families in need. Many also serve as social and community service directors.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), professional social workers are the nation’s largest group of mental health services providers. There are more clinically trained social workers—over 200,000—than psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric nurses combined. Federal law and the National Institutes of Health recognize social work as one of five core mental health professions.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs employs more than 10,000 professional social workers. It is one of the largest employers of MSW individuals in the United States. More than 40% of all disaster mental health volunteers trained by the American Red Cross are professional social workers. There are hundreds of social workers in national, state, and local elected office.

Projected growth in social work jobs is estimated to be greater than average for all occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Today, almost 50 special interest organizations contribute to the vitality and influence of the social work profession. There are social work groups for educators and researchers, as well as organizations for practitioners in health care leadership, nephrology, oncology, child welfare, schools, prisons, courts, and many other settings.

**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.
Master of Social Work, MSW
THREE YEAR 54 s.h. Program

Course Title Hours

Academic Career

Any Semester
54 s.h. of graduate level coursework must be completed; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. 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. a
Admitted students attend orientation prior to the start of 1st (fall) semester.

First Year

Hours 0
Fall
SSW:6100 Thinking Like a Social Worker 3
SSW:6200 Development of Professional Use of Self 3
SSW:6300 Theory and Skills for Working with Individuals and Families 3

Hours 9
Spring
SSW:6500 Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice I 3
SSW:6600 Engaging with Evidence 3

Hours 6
Summer
Elective course b 3

Hours 3
Second Year

Fall
SSW:6400 Theory and Skills for Working with Organizations and Communities 3
SSW:7500 Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice II 3
SSW:7550 Program and Practice Evaluation 3
Students attend generalist practicum planning meeting with field administrator

Hours 9
Spring
SSW:6700 Generalist Practicum in Social Work 3
SSW:6701 Generalist Practice Seminar 1
Elective course b 3
Students attend advanced practicum planning meeting with field administrator

Hours 7
Summer
Elective course b 3

Hours 3
Third Year

Fall
SSW:7410 or SSW:7310 Leadership Practice I: Community Relationship Building and Collaboration c or Clinical Practice I: Treatment Planning and Intervention 3
SSW:7750 or SSW:7600 or SSW:7760 Practicum with Leadership Specialization or Practicum with Clinical Specialization or Practicum in School Social Work 3 - 4
SSW:7751 or SSW:7601 Leadership Practicum Seminar I c or Clinical Practicum Seminar I 1

Hours 7-8
Spring
Students may opt to apply and take the Iowa Licensure Exam
SSW:7420 or SSW:7320 Leadership Practice II: Policy Analysis and Advocacy c or Clinical Practice II: Intervention, Evaluation, Termination 3
SSW:7430 or SSW:7330 Leadership Practice III: Leading Programs and Organizations c or Clinical Practice III: Selected Topics in Clinical Practice 3
SSW:7600 or SSW:7760 or SSW:7750 Practicum with Clinical Specialization or Practicum in School Social Work or Practicum with Leadership Specialization 3 - 4
SSW:7602 or SSW:7752 Clinical Practicum Seminar II c or Leadership Practicum Seminar II 1

Degree Application: apply for May graduation

Hours 10-11
Total Hours 54-56

a 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.
b Students complete 9 s.h. in elective coursework; must be numbered 3000 or higher to be counted for graduate credit. Work with the program administrator or faculty advisor to determine appropriate courses and sequence.
c Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.