

PhD FAQs



What is the purpose of the PhD Program?

The UA Social Work PhD program focuses on the education of social work researchers and scholars. Most graduates seek academic positions in departments of social work. The program does not prepare students for advanced social work practice. Several universities around the country, including The University of Alabama School of Social Work, now offer a Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) degree to prepare students for advanced practice.

What is the application deadline?

The application deadline for each fall cohort is February 1 of the same year. Applicants should apply by December 1 of the year previous to the date for which admission is sought to be eligible for fellowships and other funding opportunities. Late applications will be considered only under special circumstances.

When and where are courses offered? Social work PhD courses are offered during the day on Mondays and Tuesdays on campus in Tuscaloosa. The PhD course curriculum involves courses in our School of Social Work, as well as electives and coursework in statistics, in areas other than social work. Those courses outside the School can be offered on any days, and at any times.

Do you have a part-time program?

We do not have a special part-time program. Assistantships require full-time registration, and the UA Graduate School requires two semesters of full-time course work. However, the PhD Program Director can help to design special part-time course plans for at least part of the PhD curriculum.

Are courses offered on-line?

None of the required doctoral-level social work courses are offered online. Some electives or courses outside the School could be offered on-line.

How long does it take to complete the PhD program?

The length of time varies by student. Most students take 4 to 5 years. Required course work takes 2 to 2.5 years. After completing required course work, students take a comprehensive exam and then move to dissertation work.

Is financial assistance available?

Yes! Students admitted to the PhD program are generally offered funding for three years. Funding involves tuition, health insurance, and a stipend of about \$1,500 per month during the academic year. The funding comes in exchange for about 20 hours of work per week as a research or teaching assistant. In addition, we will help eligible students apply for competitive university fellowships and scholarships.

Are GRE scores required to apply? How important are the scores in admissions decisions?

GRE scores are not required.

How many applicants do you admit? How large are cohorts?

We generally enroll about five students each fall, which ranges between 15% to 25% of all applicants, depending on the year.

Must I have an MSW to apply?

Unconditional admission requires a master's degree in social work (MSW) or simultaneous application to the UA concurrent MSW/PhD program.

Must I have two-years post-MSW practice experience to apply?

Post-MSW practice experience is not required, but having it will strengthen your application and could help enrich your research. Students lacking post-MSW practice experience can face barriers if they choose to pursue a career in social work education or academia. There are opportunities within the program to gain that practice experience.

Can I maintain a full-time job while completing the PhD?

We offer assistantships because we have learned that students are unlikely to be successful in the PhD program while working full-time. University rules prohibit students from working full-time while receiving assistantships. Students who accept a full assistantship may work a maximum of 20 additional hours per week. We strongly advise against attempting to maintain a full-time job. The program requirements are demanding. Plus, engagement in lectures and other training opportunities on top of the program requirements enrich the doctoral program experience. To be successful, we urge you to make the program a top priority.

What kind of assistantships are available?

Students with assistantships are matched with faculty members to assist with research. Such opportunities are an important supplement to course work and independent research, and can often lead to conference presentations and publications. In addition, students have opportunities to assist faculty members in teaching, and to teach courses independently.

What are the strengths of the UA social work PhD program?

Our program has many strengths, including:

- Strong faculty commitment to student success
- Financial support through assistantships and other sources
- Small class sizes with courses taught by social work faculty members
- Opportunities to conduct research with faculty members and to work with faculty and other students on conference presentations and manuscripts
- Support for travel to academic conferences
- Good preparation for teaching, including a special course on social work education and opportunities to teach independently.

In addition, we have a PhD Program suite equipped with computers and printing.