

**2024-2025**

**DSW Program Toolkit**

*Revised 9.28.24*

**Disclosures and Acknowledgements**

This toolkit is intended to provide information and does not constitute a contract. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, please note that policies and procedures may change, and such updates may not be reflected in this document. Additionally, due to the document's size, it cannot encompass all the policies and information relevant to students. For the most current and comprehensive information, please consult your academic advisor, the DSW Program Director, your Capstone Project Committee chair, the Associate Dean for Educational Programs and Student Services, or other relevant personnel in the School of Social Work (SSW) or the University of Alabama Graduate School.

From the 2024-2025 Graduate School Catalog: “Many departments and programs produce publications [this toolkit] for their students and faculty in graduate programs. These documents are designed to provide detailed and useful information; however, they are not statements of official policy of The University of Alabama. In all matters, the graduate catalog of The University of Alabama contains official policies as passed by the graduate faculty’s Graduate Council and shall supersede departmental, program, or college publications.”

This toolkit (originally called a “handbook” until this Spring) was initially developed by Nicole Ruggiano, PhD, the first DSW Program Director, in 2019. It’s been subsequently revised several times by Dr. Ruggiano and later by Dr. Curtis Davis, the Interim DSW Program Director from 2022 to 2023. This iteration was revised by Dr. Tania Alameda-Lawson with the assistance of GPT-4 for clarity, coherence, and conciseness.

**Dear DSW Student,**

Welcome to the University of Alabama School of Social Work (SSW) DSW Program!

We are delighted to have you embark on this exciting journey with us. This **DSW Program Student Toolkit** is your essential resource for understanding the procedures and resources crucial to your success in the program. It is important that you familiarize yourself with these guidelines to navigate your DSW degree effectively.

Our DSW program embodies a spirit of innovation and dedication shared by both students and faculty. At the SSW, we strive to create meaningful outcomes for individuals, families, organizations, and communities at the local, national, and global levels. We woefully recognize the increasing number of individuals who lack access to the opportunities that we all need to thrive once defined the Horatio Alger tradition—a tradition that symbolized the promise that hard work would lead to success, not only for individuals but also for their children, who could surpass their parents' achievements.

This concern motivates our unwavering commitment to excellence in doctoral-level social work practice. We believe in the transformative potential of expert Doctor of Social Work (DSW) practitioners who, armed with the knowledge and skills gained through our program will drive meaningful change. Each of you will play a critical role in addressing the complex challenges faced by our profession and by the nearly one million dedicated BSW and MSW practitioners who strive daily to improve the lives of their clients.

Throughout your program, you will receive strong support from your course instructors, academic advisors, faculty mentors, and Capstone Project Committee members. As the program director, I am here to assist you at every step of the way. Given the structure of our primarily online program, we have optimized our courses to facilitate meaningful engagement with both peers and instructors. I encourage you to fully embrace online and in-person opportunities to foster a supportive learning environment, mentorship, and academic growth. Additionally, consider collaborating with your faculty mentors as well as fellow students to disseminate your knowledge and skills of applied research in regional and national conferences and in other venues and outlets across the country that provide access to BSW and MSW practitioners.

In addition to the support within the DSW program, keep in mind that you also have a robust network of advocates within the SSW, and the University. This includes Dr. Sebrena Jackson, Associate Dean of Educational Programs and Student Services; Dr. Schnavia Hatcher, Dean of the SSW; and Dr. Susan Carvalho, Dean of the University’s Graduate School, along with their teams. They are all readily available to address any questions you may have.

Thank you for choosing our DSW Program among the many options available. I wish you the best as you embark on this enriching professional and academic journey.

Once again, welcome to the University of Alabama SSW DSW Program!

**Roll Tide!**

**Tania Alameda-Lawson, PhD, MSW**

Associate Professor and DSW Program Director

**Table of Contents**

[I. Purpose of the Toolkit 7](#_Toc177816983)

[II. The SSW in the University Context 7](#_Toc177816984)

[The University of Alabama 7](#_Toc177816985)

[The Graduate School 7](#_Toc177816986)

[The School of Social Work 7](#_Toc177816987)

The School's Vision and Mission Statements 7

[History of the University of Alabama School of Social Work 8](#_Toc177816988)

[III. The Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program 9](#_Toc177816989)

A Note on CSWE Accreditation 9

[Program Overview and Requirements 9](#_Toc177816990)

DSW Program Overview 10

[DSW Program Requirements 10](#_Toc177816991)

Additional Graduate School Academic Policies Relevant to DSW Students 11

DSW Curriculum 12

[Comprehensive Paper Options 12](#_Toc177816992)

[Capstone Project Options 19](#_Toc177816993)

I[V. School of Social Work Faculty and the DSW Program Committee 23](#_Toc177816994)

[Full-time Faculty Who Can Serve as Capstone Committee Chairs 23](#_Toc177816995)

[Full-time Faculty Who Can Serve as Second Committee Members 25](#_Toc177816996)

[Academic Advisor, Mentor, Capstone Committee Chair, and Second Committee Member 25](#_Toc177816997)

[The DSW Program Committee 27](#_Toc177816998)

V. Timeline, Milestones, and Corresponding Forms 27

VI. Supports Available for Research and Conference Participation 33

[VII. Additional Support Available to Students 34](#_Toc177816999)

[Resources for New Students 34](#_Toc177817000)

[Support for Completing Graduate School Requirements 34](#_Toc177817001)

[Support with School-Life Balance 35](#_Toc177817002)

[Academic Support 35](#_Toc177817003)

[Advocacy for Graduate Students 35](#_Toc177817004)

[Professional and Career Support 35](#_Toc177817005)

[APPENDICIES 36](#_Toc177817006)

[Appendix A. Typical Course of Study for Advanced Clinical Track 37](#_Toc177817007)

[Appendix B. Typical Course of Study for Organizational Leadership Track 38](#_Toc177817008)

[Appendix C. Application and Admission Requirements 39](#_Toc177817009)

# I. Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to supplement the University of Alabama (UA) *Graduate Catalog.*  Click the following link to access the Graduate Catalog with specific details about the [School of Social Work’s Programs](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/social-work/).

The faculty and staff of the School of Social Work (SSW) provide education, leadership, mentoring, and guidance to assist students in obtaining the maximum possible benefit from graduate education. For additional advice and/or clarification of UA Graduate School policies and the SSW procedures, students should consult with their academic advisor, the DSW Program Director, or staff in the office of the Associate Dean for Educational Programs and Student Services.

# II. The School of Social Work in the University Context

## The University of Alabama

The state's oldest public university, UA is the senior comprehensive doctoral-level institution in Alabama. Established by constitutional provision, with subsequent statutory mandates and authorizations, the University's mission is to advance the intellectual and social condition of all the people of the state through quality programs of teaching, research, and service.

More about the University’s mission, vision, and goals can be found [here.](https://www.ua.edu/about/mission)

## The Graduate School

The Graduate School, through graduate offerings of the various schools and colleges, prepares students for careers in a wide range of teaching, research, and service activities. The Graduate School operates in cooperation with the other divisions of the University to foster the research and scholarly activities that are the hallmark of a graduate institution. Graduate study, especially at the doctoral level, aims at the development of independent scholarship, originality, and competence in research or competence in the various professional areas in which doctoral programs are offered.

Click the following link to access UA’s [Graduate Catalog Home](https://catalog.ua.edu/) page.

## The School of Social Work

***The School’s Vision and Mission Statements***

***Vision Statement***

Leading the country in community-engaged research in health, behavioral health, and social and economic justice solutions for Alabama and the nation.

***Mission Statement***

The University of Alabama’s School of Social Work prepares scholar-practitioners and researchers committed to ending adverse social conditions and promoting societal well-being through teaching, research and service.

* ***Teaching*.** The SSW awards the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree, the Master of Social Work (MSW) degree, the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, and Doctor of Social Work (DSW) degree. The SSW works to increase the number of competent social workers in the state and in the region.
* ***Research***. The SSW develops research-based knowledge of social problems and their solutions.
* ***Service***. The SSW provides resources and leadership by partnering with individuals, families, groups, community agencies, and organizations at all levels. In addition, the SSW improves the delivery of social services, with an emphasis on public social services contexts and underserved and disenfranchised populations.

As a diverse community of teachers, researchers, learners, and support persons with shared values and aspirations, the SSW promotes lifelong learning, research, and service initiatives to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. More about the SSW can be found [here](https://socialwork.ua.edu/about/).

##

## History of the University of Alabama School of Social Work

The University of Alabama, located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, is a public co-educational institution that began admitting students in 1831. A detailed history of the SSW can be found [here](https://socialwork.ua.edu/about/history/).

The University of Alabama is the only university in the state that offers degrees at three levels of social work education: the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), the Master of Social Work (MSW), and at the doctoral level, we offer the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Social Work, and the Doctor of Social Work (DSW).

**BSW Program.** The undergraduate program in social work was approved in 1969, placed in the SSW in 1970, and was first accredited by CSWE in 1974. The [BSW Program](https://socialwork.ua.edu/academics/bsw-program/) has been accredited continuously since 1974 and prepares graduates for generalist social work practice.

**MSW Program.** The MSW program has been accredited continuously since the first class received their master’s degrees in 1969. The [MSW Program](https://socialwork.ua.edu/academics/msw-program/) prepares graduates for advanced social work practice.

**PhD Program.** The only doctoral program began as a Doctor of Social Work (DSW) in 1975 to prepare researchers and instructors for the social work profession. In 1992, the faculty substantially revised the program to confer the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Social Work. The [PhD Program](https://socialwork.ua.edu/academics/phd-program/) is a member of the [Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE)](http://www.gadephd.org/) in Social Work and prepares graduates for careers in research, scholarship, and education.

**DSW Program.** The current DSW program was approved in November 2018, with the first cohort of DSW students beginning in Fall 2019. Given increased demand for advanced clinical and administrative social work education and training, the DSW was created as the state of Alabama’s first professional practice doctorate degree in social work. Like the PhD Program, the DSW Program is a member of [GADE](https://www.gadesocialwork.org/) and the [GADE DSW Caucus](https://www.gadesocialwork.org/dsw-caucus). Details on how the [DSW Program](https://socialwork.ua.edu/dsw/) differs from the PhD Program can be found [here](https://socialwork.ua.edu/dsw-faqs/).

# III. The Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program

## A Note on CSWE Accreditation

CSWE’s Board of Accreditation (CSWE-BOA) is currently piloting the accreditation of Professional Practice Doctoral Programs (PPDP). Although there are currently no CSWE-BOA accredited PPDPs, in June 2020, CSWE-BOA approved and adopted the [*Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work*](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cswe.org%2Fgetmedia%2F10b68fde-d392-4b87-97c1-bb64cdcac41a%2FAccreditation-Standards-for-Professional-Practice-Doctoral-Programs-in-Social-Work-June-2020.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cruth.pionke%40ua.edu%7C793943705b2e49cf389808dc24326c80%7C2a00728ef0d040b4a4e8ce433f3fbca7%7C0%7C0%7C638425046181299911%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=nyOewrvrE0aUAbw4bIg8cuXMwgbs9yBguuIz6h%2FdIZg%3D&reserved=0). The UA SSW DSW Program has adopted the [*Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work*](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cswe.org%2Fgetmedia%2F10b68fde-d392-4b87-97c1-bb64cdcac41a%2FAccreditation-Standards-for-Professional-Practice-Doctoral-Programs-in-Social-Work-June-2020.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cruth.pionke%40ua.edu%7C793943705b2e49cf389808dc24326c80%7C2a00728ef0d040b4a4e8ce433f3fbca7%7C0%7C0%7C638425046181316934%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=F6Ev2a%2BfpZz3DcN5jfBBYJ5n9EO7OvlUJKGAK5SewLY%3D&reserved=0), version April 2023, and is prepared to undergo accreditation once it becomes available. For information about PPDP accreditation and the current pilot, please visit the [*Council on Social Work Education website*](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcswe.informz.net%2Fz%2FcjUucD9taT0xMTM3Mzg1MiZwPTEmdT0xMTIzOTAzMjc3JmxpPTEwNjUyMzY3Mw%2Findex.html&data=05%7C02%7Cruth.pionke%40ua.edu%7C793943705b2e49cf389808dc24326c80%7C2a00728ef0d040b4a4e8ce433f3fbca7%7C0%7C0%7C638425046181325902%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=cb441ieBHLI52ajlUT0dH4jfUHnPDStILesB%2Fu3lCkY%3D&reserved=0).

## Program Overview and Requirements

The Graduate School requires that the overview and program requirements for graduate degree programs be maintained in the Graduate School Catalog. Consequently, here we list the contents included in the DSW Program Overview and Requirements webpages in the Graduate School Catalog.

**DSW Program Overview**

Please refer to the [DSW Graduate School Catalog Overview](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/social-work/dsw/#text) tab for information on:

* The DSW Program Mission Statement.
* DSW Program and Specializations
* DSW Program Curriculum
* The Learning Outcomes for the DSW Program.
* The Goals of the DSW Program.

## DSW Program Requirements

To access policies on the following topics, please refer to the [DSW Graduate School Catalog Requirements](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/social-work/dsw/#requirementstext) tab in the Graduate School Catalog and scroll down to the bottom of the webpage:

* Admissions
* DSW Degree Requirements
* Table: DSW Core Courses
* Specializations (Track, Concentrations)
* Specialization Requirements and Electives
* Academic Advising and Capstone Project Committee Formation (Please note: Mentoring as not be added to the DSW Graduate School Catalog since changes to the Catalog are only accepted in February of every year.) For DSW Program mentoring information see page 18 of this toolkit.
* Comprehensive Paper
* Capstone Project
* Additional Academic Requirements
	+ Summer Residencies, Orientation and Synchronous Course Sessions
* Requirements for Continuing Social Work Practice
* Table: Advanced Clinical Practice Concentration: Courses and Credit Hours
* Table: Organizational Leadership Concentration: Courses and Credit Hours
* Transfer Credit
* Comprehensive Paper Requirements
* Capstone Project
* Capstone Committee Formation
* Admission to Candidacy Requirements
* Continuous Enrollment Policy
* Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements
* Student Progress Requirement
* Additional Academic Requirement
* Academic Misconduct Information
* Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information
* Academic Grievance Information
* Grades and Academic Standing
* Graduate School Deadlines Information
* Application for Graduation Information

**Additional Graduate School Academic Policies Relevant to DSW Students**

* + 2024-2025 Graduate Catalog
		- [About UA Graduate Education](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/)
			* + `[Academic Policies](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/)
				+ [Degree Requirements](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/degree-requirements/#doctoraldegreestext)
				+ Doctoral Degrees

Doctor of Social Work

* + - Admission to Doctoral Degree Programs
		- Residency Requirements
		- Graduate Credits
		- Previously earned UA Graduate Credit and Transfers of Graduate Credit
		- Time Limits
		- Time Limits Extension Requests
		- Revalidation of Expired Credits
		- Plan of Study
		- Preliminary or Comprehensive Examination (“Paper” for DSW Program)
		- Admission to Candidacy
		- Continuous Doctoral Research Hours Registration
		- Dissertation Committee
		- Dissertation Proposal
		- Dissertation
		- Final-Semester Minimum Doctoral Research Hours Registration
		- Protection of Human Subjects for Research
		- Dissertation Defense
		- Virtual Participation in Committee-Based Exams/Defenses
		- Final Dissertation Submission and Approval
		- Dissertation Embargo
		- Application for Graduation
		- Withholding or Withdrawing an Advanced Degree
* [Grades and Academic Standing](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/grades-academic-standing/)
	+ - Grades and Grade Points
		- Grade Point Average (GPA)
		- Repeating a Course
		- Scholastic Requirements
		- Readmission
		- Reinstatement
		- Clinical Components and Dismissal
		- Graduation Requirements
* [Graduate Course Inventory](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/all-courses/)
* [Records Maintenance and Disposition](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/records-maintenance-disposition/)
* [Withdrawals and Leaves of Absence](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/withdrawals-leave-of-absence/)
	+ [Medical Withdrawal and Return to Campus](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/medical-withdrawal/)

## DSW Program Curriculum

The DSW program is a 3-year, part-time, primarily online program. It requires a total of 45 credit hours, including eight core courses and six specialization courses, two of which are electives. With the exception of the independent study courses, all of the remaining courses in the curriculum include a minimum of four to six sessions per semester that are delivered synchronously. Participation in these sessions is required. Coursework is typically completed during the first two years of the program. At the end of the second year, students submit a written comprehensive paper in a social work practice area. Once the paper is approved and the student has taken at least 30 credit hours, they can apply for Admission to Candidacy. After being admitted to candidacy, the student can enroll in the capstone project course. Additional degree requirements include three on-campus experiences in Tuscaloosa: a one-and-a-half orientation, a four-day summer residency at the end of their first year, and a five-day summer residency at the end of their second year**. See** [Appendix A](#A) **and** [Appendix B](#Appendix_B) **for typical course of study for students in the Advanced Clinical Practice and Organizational Leadership tracks, respectively.**

## Comprehensive Paper Requirement Options

|  |
| --- |
| **Option 1. Review of the Evidence** |

For this option, the student will conduct a review of the evidence on an aspect of social work practice that concerns them from their practice setting. This could include a review of: (a) a clinical or macro intervention; (b) a condition or issue experienced by a population; or (c) an approach to assessment or measurement in social work practice. Some examples of such topics include reviews of:

* Approaches to suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth.
* Measurement tools for food insecurity.
* Interventions for depression in older Latinx population.
* Studies on consensus organizing methods.

Students are encouraged to discuss their preliminary topic with their academic advisor, faculty mentor, or other faculty members that have expertise in the topic area to determine the appropriateness and feasibility of the topic as a Comprehensive Paper.

For this option, Option 1, the student will have to select one of the three following approaches based on the existing literature on the topic and what is the best fit for their social work setting:

1. **Building on a Systematic Review.** For this option, students will have to identify an existing systematic review on a social work intervention and provide an updated analysis. Replicating the methodology reported by the original authors, the student will complete a systematic review of related studies that have been completed after the original review was performed. The final report should follow PRISMA guidelines. See the [PRISMA 2020 Statement](https://www.prisma-statement.org/prisma-2020), the PRISMA 2020 [Explanation and Elaboration](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n160) paper, and The PRISMA 2020 [Checklist](file:////Users/tania/Documents/DSW%20Administration/DSW%20Student%20Toolkit/1.%2509See%20the%20PRISMA%202020%20Statement%2C%20the%20PRISMA%202020%20Explanation%20and%20Elaboration%20paper%2C%20and%20The%20PRISMA%20checklist%20for%20additional%20resources.) for additional resources.
2. **Reviewing Systematic Reviews.** For topics where multiple systematic reviews have been conducted, the student will perform a critical review of the available systematic reviews. The final report should reflect [AMSTAR guidelines](https://amstar.ca/Amstar_Checklist.php).
3. **Original Systematic Review.** For topics where a systematic review has not been conducted, this option will require students to complete a systematic review of intervention studies. The systematic review can focus on reviews of qualitative and/or quantitative research and reflect PRISMA guidelines. See the [PRISMA 2020 Statement](https://www.prisma-statement.org/prisma-2020), the PRISMA 2020 [Explanation and Elaboration](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n160) paper, and The PRISMA 2020 [Checklist](file:////Users/tania/Documents/DSW%20Administration/DSW%20Student%20Toolkit/1.%2509See%20the%20PRISMA%202020%20Statement%2C%20the%20PRISMA%202020%20Explanation%20and%20Elaboration%20paper%2C%20and%20The%20PRISMA%20checklist%20for%20additional%20resources.) for additional resources.

***Expectation***

For each of these options, the student will need to:

1. Summarize the findings of the review.
2. Offer a discussion on how the findings of the review should inform social work practice, policy, and future research.
3. Papers are expected to be of similar length to a publishable manuscript (20-30 pages, though may be longer).

***Approval of Comprehensive Paper Option 1***

Students successfully pass the Comprehensive Paper when your Chair and the second committee member sign the Approval of Comprehensive Paper Form. The Comprehensive Paper must meet the following requirements:

* Presents an important issue related to social work practice. This should be established before embarking on the Comprehensive Paper.
* Provides clear detail on the methodology used to identify and assess the literature.
* Makes a meaningful contribution to current knowledge on social work practice.
* Clearly describes the implications of findings on social work practice, policy, and future research.
* Includes quality writing and content that indicates it is suitable for submission to a peer-review journal.

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| **Option 2: Three Paper Model** |

For this option you will complete three papers to demonstrate knowledge about the social work intervention, theory, and research methodology that will be used in your Capstone Project. Ideally, you can use Option 2 as the basis for your final report of the Capstone project, which will be submitted for approval by the Capstone Project Committee.

**Option 2: Paper 1. Social Work Practice Issue Paper (about 10 or more pages)**

This first paper will include a literature review on a specific issue occurring in your social work practice area at the individual, family, organizational, community, government, or societal level. There is no limit to the topic of focus, but you are encouraged to consult with your advisor or other faculty members about the topic of focus.

While the social work issue presented should be discussed within the context of your current social work focus area (e.g., issue experienced by your clients, organizational challenge to providing services), you should describe how the issue is related to larger, multifaceted social work issues (e.g., mental health, health disparities, housing, child welfare, discrimination, gerontological social work issues…).

***Expectation***

A successful paper should include:

* A clear definition of the issue and description of its relevance to social work practice.
* A presentation of the literature on the issue.
* Evidence (e.g., agency data, organizational reports, newspaper articles, Census data) of this issue affecting your agency or direct practice.
* Relevant historical, social, and political contexts for the issue.
* Theoretical perspective on why the issue exists.

***Approval of Comprehensive Paper Option 2 Paper 1***

Students successfully pass this portion of the Comprehensive Paper when your advisor and a second committee member sign the Approval of Comprehensive Paper Form. after determining that Paper 1 meets the following requirements:

* Meets all of the relevant requirements listed above.
* Be an appropriate topic to address in the Capstone Project.
* Cite relevant research to support arguments and consistently use APA style.

**Option 2 Paper 2. Intervention Paper (approximately 10-20 pages)**

The second paper should provide a description and rationale for an intervention designed to address the topic highlighted in Paper1. After providing a summary introduction to the problem discussed in Paper1, you should identify an existing intervention approach that may be applied or modified and applied within the social work practice setting to address this issue. The intervention may be one that is implemented at the individual, family, group, community, organizational, and/or policy level. Some examples could include:

* Individual/Family Level:
	+ Applying a therapy designed for one population for use with another population
	+ Adding a new component to an existing therapeutic strategy being used with a client population
	+ Using an available technology to administer an intervention approach that is normally administered through face-to-face.
* Community Level (community may be geographically defined or defined by shared identity):
	+ Implementing a community organizing technique within a community setting
	+ Implementing a new service for communities experiencing a social concern (e.g., food deserts, persistent poverty, failing schools, climate change, gentrification, low/under employment, lack of affordable housing).
* Organizational Level:
	+ New approach to evaluating outcomes for the organization
	+ Implementing a new policy advocacy strategy
	+ An intervention aimed at addressing a resource, personnel, or organizational structural issue.

In some cases, you may want to work on a topic that may not traditionally be thought of as an intervention (e.g., community organizing, course development). In such cases, you should work with your advisor on the topic.

***Expectation***

After identifying the intervention for the issue, you should provide the following: (Note not all of the bullet points below will relate to every intervention paper):

* The historical, social, and political contexts of the intervention, as appropriate.
* A review of the scientific literature on the efficacy of the intervention. Students must demonstrate ability in selecting appropriate empirically-based articles, critically evaluating study findings, highlighting methodological flaws, synthesizing research findings and presenting a clear position about the problem area being reviewed.
* Theoretical perspectives on why the intervention will be effective or appropriate for your setting.
* Description of how the intervention should be applied in your practice setting. This may include tables and figures for support (e.g., logic models, client flow models).

***Approval of Comprehensive Paper Option 2 Paper 2***

Students successfully pass this portion of the Comprehensive Paper when your advisor and a second committee member sign the Approval of Comprehensive Paper Form. The paper must meet the following requirements:

* Meet all of the relevant requirements listed above.
* Demonstrate an extensive review of research and theory.
* Demonstrate critical thought about the scientific literature.
* Logical conclusions and recommendations, based on evidence presented.
* A clear description of an intervention that is supported by evidence and theory.
* Develop a clear and feasible plan for implementing the intervention.
* Cite relevant research to support arguments and consistently use APA style.

**Option 2 Paper 3. Practice Evaluation Plan (about 4-8 pages, not including references)**

The third paper may be shorter in length than the first two. First, you will write a small summary of the problem and intervention described in Papers 1 and 2. Secondly, you will outline an evaluation strategy that aims to assess the outcomes from implementing the intervention identified in Paper 2.

***Expectation***

Students should include details outlining/highlighting:

* The desired outcomes for the intervention that will be measured in the evaluation.
* How outcomes will be operationalized and measured in the evaluation.
* The approach to collecting and analysing data for the evaluation.
* How findings will inform continued implementation of the evaluation and for the field of social work practice overall.

***Approval of Comprehensive Paper Option 2 Paper 3***

Students successfully pass this portion of the Comprehensive Paper when your advisor and a second committee member sign the Approval of Comprehensive Paper Form after determining that Paper 1 meets the following requirements:

* Meet all of the relevant requirements listed above.
* Present a feasible and logical evaluation approach.
* Justify methodology for your evaluation approach using academic literature.
* Demonstrate critical thought about the scientific literature.
* Cite relevant research to support arguments and consistently use APA style.

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| **Option 3: Submitted Grant Application** |

The third option that you may take for your Comprehensive Paper is to submit a grant to fund a project related to your social work area of expertise. Typically, grant applications from private foundation and public sources require information that is highlighted in the other two Comprehensive Paper options, such as: (a) background of the problem and justification for the proposed project; (b) description of an intervention that will address the problem and how the intervention will be carried out; and (c) a plan for evaluating success of the project.

***Expectation***

Students must submit to your advisor:

1. A copy of the grant description and instructions
2. A copy of your grant application
3. Evidence that the application has been submitted (e.g., confirmation email)
4. Signed statement from you that you were the person who completed the application (as opposed to it being a larger group effort at your organization) and
5. If the grant application does not require an evaluation plan or significant space dedicated to the description of the evaluation plan, you should also submit a written description of how you plan to evaluate your project.

***Approval of Comprehensive Paper Option 3***

Students successfully pass the Comprehensive Paper when your advisor and a second committee member sign the Approval of Comprehensive Paper Form after determining that the Comprehensive Paper meets the following requirements:

* Meet all of the relevant requirements listed above.
* The application must follow the grant application instructions and requirements.
* The proposed project must be grounded in evidence.
* Present a feasible and logical evaluation approach.
* Cite relevant research to support arguments and consistently use APA style.
* If the grant maker provides information about how grants will be evaluated, those guidelines may be used for evaluation of the Paper.

## Capstone Project Options

**Option 1. Intervention Implementation and Evaluation**

There are no pre-set limits to the topic you can select for your capstone project, but the focus should be on real-world application and practical solutions used to improve social work practice, services, or policies. Unlike a dissertation that typically emphasizes generating new knowledge or theory that may be relevant to the larger scholarly community, capstone projects are generally grounded in the practical realities of social work, addressing immediate issues faced by practitioners and communities.

***Expectation***

Students will:

1. Identify a social work issue in the practice setting and justify its need to be addressed via an intervention.
2. Design an intervention for the issue.
3. Implement the intervention, and
4. Evaluate the intervention, such as utilizing focus groups, developing logic models to guide the evaluation and ensure alignment with goals and objectives, pre-and post-tests to compare base-line and outcomes providing evidence of impact, implementation science and fidelity assessments to ensure the intervention was implemented consistently to ensure its effectiveness or to make sure that it is effective if a new population, etc. was used, mixed-methods research that incorporates quant/qual methods that amplifies the voices of end-users.

Examples of different types of projects in different settings could include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Clinical Practice with Individuals and Families | * Implement and evaluate a new and evidence-supported therapeutic technique with individual or family clients.
* Adding a non-clinical component to existing clinical treatment for clients to further improve outcomes.
* Use a new assessment tool or comparing different assessment tools to measure client need, progress, or outcomes in clinical care. Implement an existing in-person approach to direct practice using a technology platform.
 |
| Organizational/ Administrative Practice | * Implement a program that promotes self-care for front-line workers and assessing outcomes.
* Design and implement a program or organization-wide evaluation to measure client outcomes.
* Develop and implement an evidence-based training for administration and/or front-line workers on a topic that reflects social work values and organizational need.
* Implement and evaluate a new policy advocacy or social media campaign for the organization that promotes social justice.
 |
|  |  |
| Social Work Higher Education Settings | * Implement and evaluate a program designed to promote retention in college-student populations (e.g., first-generation, those facing poverty, insecure housing, differently abled, etc.).
* Implement a new teaching approach or field-based learning activity to enrich student learning in a particular topic area.
* Implement and evaluate a training for field instructors on a topic of need.
 |
| Community-based Practice Settings | * Develop and evaluate a new service for community members, based on evidence of unmet need.
* Develop and evaluate a coalition or campaign that brings varying community stakeholders together to address a complex local issue.
 |

***Approval of Capstone Project Option 1***

Students must receive a passing grade from their faculty advisor and second faculty member. To receive a passing grade for their Capstone Project, students must demonstrate the ability to:

* Identify, critically assess, and apply advanced knowledge in social work theory and evidence.
* Assess client, organizational, and/or community-based needs.
* Use the social work literature to support arguments.
* Inform intervention design and implementation with existing theory and evidence.
* Design a rigorous practice-based evaluation.
* Effectively communicate advanced practice knowledge through academic/professional written and verbal communication; and
* Consistent use of APA style, as well as academic and social work ethical behaviour.

|  |
| --- |
| **Option 2. Practice-Focused Thesis** |

Oxford Dictionary defines a thesis as “a long essay or dissertation involving personal research.” In some cases, students may have interest in undertaking a practice-focused project that does not involve an evaluation but works towards the development of a practice-based tool. Examples of such projects may include (but are not limited to):

* Development and initial validation (e.g. face validity) or testing of a new measure.
* Translating an existing measure into a different language and conduct an initial test for validity.
* Collecting and analysing data that is directly related to a social work practice issue (e.g., interviews from stakeholders about potential facilitators or barriers to implementing a new intervention; observational study assessing fidelity of an intervention across practitioners).
* A policy analysis that can inform a policy advocacy campaign.

Note that for this option, students may be encouraged to take an additional statistical course as an elective if their project involves quantitative analysis. All papers under this option should provide reflect critical thought on how social work practice should change based on findings. Students must receive a passing grade from their faculty advisor and second faculty member. To receive a passing grade for their Capstone Project, students must demonstrate the ability to:

* Identify, critically assess, and apply advanced knowledge in social work theory and evidence.
* Use the social work literature to support your arguments.
* Inform the development of a practice-based tool.
* Apply rigorous research and evaluation methodologies.
* Effectively communicate advanced practice knowledge through academic/professional written and verbal communication; and
* Consistent use of APA style, as well as academic and social work ethical behaviour.

|  |
| --- |
| **Option 3. First-Authored Paper** |

For the third option students may elect to submit an original manuscript on a social work topic for publication in an academic journal or other scholarly platform. In many cases, this paper may focus on topics that reflect options 1 or 2 above. However, by publishing a manuscript, the student does not have to complete a separate final report. Manuscripts for option 3 may also focus on broader topics of social work, such as a conceptual paper on an emerging or pressing social work issue, a statistical analysis of agency data from the student’s social work practice setting, a policy analysis, or a systematic analysis.

The preference for this option is that the student will publish in a peer-reviewed academic journal. However, other scholarly outlets may be acceptable as well, including book chapters; literature reviews, policy briefs, or other writing products published by a government (local, state, federal, global) or similar agency. Editorials, book reviews, and other similar writing for any publication outlet are not acceptable.

There may be other types of publications not listed here. In such cases, the student should reach out to their advisor and the DSW Program Director before they start the project to determine if a specific writing project would be acceptable for this option. In cases where the type of proposed writing project is not listed here, the chair of the student’s Capstone Committee and the DSW Program director must both approve the proposed writing project if it’s determined that the work involves the level of rigor and scholarship that reflects the goal of this Capstone Project option (for instance, use of citations, integration of theory or data).

If a manuscript is submitted for review and does not receive a decision on the manuscript by the time they would complete all other program requirements, the committee may approve the Capstone Project if they are satisfied with the quality of work that is under review.

Students should regularly consult with one or more faculty members on the development of the manuscript. Students may choose to co-author with faculty or other students on the manuscript, though the student must be the first author for the manuscript to qualify as their Capstone Project. By serving as the first author, it is expected that the student played a leadership role in the development and writing of the manuscript.

To receive a passing grade for the Capstone Project, students must:

* Write a manuscript that has implications for social work practice.
* Have the manuscript under review or accepted for publication in a social work journal or a journal in a closely related field.
* Be the first or sole author on the manuscript.
* If there are multiple authors, students must submit a document that outlines the contribution of each author to the manuscript and sign the document.
* Students who co-author with others must complete the Capstone Project Authorship Contribution Form in addition to submitting their Capstone Approval form that is required.
* Students do not have to submit a separate written report from their manuscript but must still present their work through a Capstone Project defence presentation.
* Students are required to submit the preprint of their manuscript using the DSW Capstone Final Report Template and in the event that the journal reviewing the manuscript does not allow pre-prints to be distributed freely, students are excused from the report requirement (note that this is not common for most journals).

Please note that successfully passing the Capstone Project with this option still requires the approval of the committee chair and member. Simply submitting a paper for publication without committee approval is not sufficient for passing the Capstone. For example, if a student submits a manuscript for publication that the committee believes is of poor quality, the student will not successfully pass their Capstone just because the manuscript is under review.

# VI. School of Social Work Faculty and the DSW Program Committee

The faculty of the SSW guides the student’s progress in the DSW Program. Capstone committee chairs must be faculty members of the SSW and have UA Graduate Faculty Status. Instructors of courses in the DSW Program and second committee members of capstone project committees can have Full, Associate, or Affiliate Graduate Faculty Status at The University of Alabama.

The SSW faculty–whose expertise includes many substantive areas including children's services, aging, rural populations, school social work, criminal/juvenile justice, social work and health care, and clients’ use of services–conducts research that informs current and future social work practice and social welfare policies and services.

## Full-time Faculty Who Can Serve as Capstone Committee Chairs[[1]](#footnote-1), [[2]](#footnote-2)

* Tania Alameda-Lawson\*^, PhD (Florida International), DSW Program Director and Associate Professor
* Brian Bride^, PhD (Georgia), MPH (Harvard University), Hillcrest Endowed Professor
* Amie Brunson\*^, DSW (Alabama), Clinical Assistant Professor
* Daphne Cain^, PhD (Tennessee), Professor
* Catherine Carlson^, PhD (Columbia), Associate Professor
* Ellen L. Csikai^, PhD (Pittsburgh), Professor & Editor Journal of Social Work and End-of-Life and Palliative Care
* Leah Cheatham\*^, PhD (Florida State), Associate Professor

* Luciana Giorgio Cosenza^, PhD (Columbia), Assistant Professor
* Samantha Guz\*^, PhD. (Chicago), Assistant Professor
* Schnavia Hatcher^ (Kansas), Dean, School of Social Work and Professor
* Laura Hopson\*^, PhD (Texas-Austin), Associate Professor
* Sebrena Jackson\*^, PhD (Clark Atlanta), Associate Dean for Educational Programs and Student Services and Associate Professor
* Dalila John^, DSW, (U St. Thomas), MSW Program Director and Clinical Assistant Professor
* Karen Johnson\*^, PhD (Columbia), Associate Professor
* Dione King^, PhD (Georgia), Associate Professor, Associate Dean for Professional Advancement and Assessment

* Hee Lee^, PhD (UCLA), Endowed Academic Chair in Social Work (Health) and Professor
* Hyunjune Lee^, PhD (Case Western), Assistant Professor
* Lewis Lee\*^, PhD (Pittsburgh), Associate Professor
* Tenesha Littleton^, PhD (Georgia), Assistant Professor
* Hyunjin Noh^, PhD (Wisconsin-Madison), Associate Professor and PhD Program Director
* Lindamarie Olson^, PhD (Houston), Assistant Professor
* Avani Shah\*^, PhD (Alabama), Associate Professor
* Nicole Ruggiano\*^, Ph.D. (Delaware), Associate Dean of Research and Professor
* Cassandra E. Simon^, PhD (Texas-Arlington), Associate Professor
* Brenda D. Smith^, PhD (Chicago), Professor
* Courtney Chapman Thomas^, DSW (Alabama), Director of Experiential Programs and Community Partnerships and Clinical Assistant Professor
* Amy C. Traylor^, PhD (Georgia), Associate Professor
* Sherron Wilkes^, DSW (Alabama), BSW Program Director and Clinical Assistant Professor

## Full-time Faculty Who Can Serve as Second Committee Members

* Amy McLean, MSW, (Alabama) Distance Online Coordinator, Instructor
* Jade Scales, MSW, Instructor
* Destiny Thomas, MSW, BSW Practicum Coordinator
* Carrie Turner, MSW (Alabama), MSW Field Coordinator and Senior Instructor

[[3]](#footnote-3)~

## Academic Advisors, Mentors, Capstone Committee Chairs, and Second Committee Members

In the DSW program, the roles and functions of the academic advisor, mentor, and chair of the capstone project committee vary, but all are essential for supporting students' success and extending their learning beyond the classroom.

***Academic Advisor***

The academic advisor assists students in understanding degree requirements and tracking progress toward the educational milestones necessary for graduation. They provide support during academic challenges and connect students with School and University resources. Additionally, the academic advisor ensures that a student’s course selection, including their chosen track and electives, aligns with their academic and career goals.

Upon entering the DSW Program, students will be advised by the DSW program director for the first two years, or up until the student has selected a Chair and has submitted a Capstone Project Committee Form. Alternatively, a faculty mentor can take over academic advising responsibilities on behalf of a student if arrangements have been made between the faculty mentor and the DSW program Director.

***Mentor***

The mentor offers personalized support and advice tailored to the mentee's interests and career aspirations. Mentors share personal and professional experiences that help mentees navigate challenges and build professional connections in the field, such as through conferences and meetings. They also offer encouragement and emotional support, fostering resilience and confidence throughout the mentee’s doctoral studies and beyond.

A mentor will also be assigned to each student upon entering the DSW program. However, if the student finds that another faculty member may be doing work more related to their area of practice, mentoring assignments can be changed. This change in mentoring duties must be arranged through the DSW program director.

***Chair of the Capstone Project Committee***

The Chair of the student's Capstone Project Committee holds primary responsibility for the work produced by the student. They collaborate with the second committee member during both the Comprehensive Paper phase and the Capstone Project phase of the student’s doctoral journey. The Chair ensures that the topic and option selected for the Comprehensive Paper are appropriate and meet essential expectations from the outset. They meet with the student throughout the development of the Comprehensive Paper, guiding them until it meets the standards set by the School of Social Work and is ready for approval.

Once the student has been admitted to candidacy and begins work on the capstone project, the Chair, along with the second committee member, provides guidance and oversight. They ensure that the research design and methods selected are suitable, and that the project is relevant to the field while meeting the DSW program’s standards. The Chair and the second committee member are expected to review several drafts and provide constructive feedback up to and including the student's doctoral oral defense and presentation.

Part-time instructors, and instructors/practitioners within the SSW, the University of Alabama are also eligible to serve as second committee members on Capstone Project Committees. In such cases, the student must inform the DSW program director to submit a request for Affiliate Graduate Faculty status. To do so, please send the Director a copy of the individual’s CV, e-mail address, and a statement on why their expertise will be supportive in the Capstone Project process.

Together, these roles create a supportive framework for our DSW students, helping them successfully navigate their academic program, develop their skills, and complete significant research projects that contribute to the field of social work.

## The DSW Program Committee

The DSW Program Committee oversees the DSW Program. This committee, which includes faculty from the SSW as well as DSW student representation, one representative/one alternate from each cohort, provides on-going assessment, guidance, and decision-making. The committee establishes and recommends changes to admissions and curriculum policies, which are then reviewed by the faculty of the SSW. The faculty members of this committee review all applications for admission to the DSW Program and make recommendations to the DSW Program Director.

# VII. Timeline, Milestones, and Corresponding Forms

**Timeline**

The table below includes a timeline based on the DSW curriculum as it was designed by the SSW faculty and approved by the State of Alabama, the University of Alabama Systems, and the UA Graduate School as a three-year, primarily online program in 2018. We acknowledge that many factors can play a role in a student’s need to depart from this timeline. At the earliest sign that factors beyond your control may impact your progress through the anticipated timeline, please consult with the DSW Program Director as your Academic Advisor, to discuss your options.

Moreover, within the next year or two, we anticipate becoming among the first DSW programs to begin the CSWE accreditation process and if for this reason alone, it is critical that we adhere to the timeline that aligns with our curriculum and our program goals. For this reason, it is important to understand that no matter how tempting it might be to want to complete the doctoral program ahead of the curriculum, doing so will unquestionably undermine the curriculum and will subsequently put the degree at risk as our program undergoes the yearly university assessment and upcoming accreditation CSWE.

***How will the curriculum be undermined?***

Let’s take a look at the simplest example but not one that comes up routinely.

Let’s consider the simplest and straightforward example: SW 701 and SW 702, which are sequential core courses. SW 701 is a prerequisite for SW 702, meaning students are expected to have mastered the course learning objectives of SW 701 before enrolling in SW 702. This foundational understanding is crucial for students to engage successfully with the content of SW 702.

If we allowed students to enroll in SW 702 without first completing SW 701, there would be significant implications. Should those students pass SW 702, it would raise questions from university reviewers and accreditation specialists regarding the validity of both courses. Specifically, if students can succeed in SW 702 without taking SW 701, it could suggest redundancy in course content. This raises a crucial question: Is the coursework and, in tandem, the program truly equipping DSW students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become expert practitioners capable of addressing today’s complex societal challenges?

Another scenario arises when students believe that a course paper can be easily turned into an approved comprehensive paper in the summer of their first year or the fall of their second year, prior to completing the required courses in their selected track. This situation represents a significant red flag for program reviewers and accreditation specialists. The approval of a Comprehensive Paper is intended to demonstrate a student's capacity to integrate and apply knowledge gained throughout their DSW coursework. More importantly, it serves as a quality assurance measure that ensures students meet the rigorous academic and professional standards expected in a doctoral program, thereby contributing to the integrity and quality of the DSW program and its curriculum.

If a student receives approval for a Comprehensive Paper without having completed the requisite coursework, it raises serious concerns about how we can defend the integrity and quality of our program and a DSW degree from the University of Alabama SSW. Addressing such validity questions is essential to maintain our program's reputation and ensure that our graduates are genuinely prepared to excel in their professional roles. See Table 1 on page 30 for an illustration of DSW timelines, milestones and corresponding forms and processes.

**Milestones**

These milestones represent critical steps in your progression through the DSW program. Completing each one is essential to meeting program requirements.

***Capstone Project Committee Formation*.** Forming a Capstone Project Committee is a crucial first step in your DSW journey. The committee will guide and support you throughout your Comprehensive Paper and Capstone Project, ensuring you meet academic standards and project requirements. The committee typically consists of faculty members with expertise relevant to your project. Their role is to provide guidance, feedback, and oversight as you develop your research.

***Comprehensive Paper Approval Form*.** The comprehensive paper signifies that you have demonstrated the ability to synthesize knowledge gained during your coursework.Approval of the paper is required before admission to candidacy and embarking on your Capstone Project.

***Admission to Candidacy*.** Admission to candidacy marks a significant transition in your doctoral program, indicating that you have met all preliminary requirements and are ready to focus on your Capstone Project. Achieving candidacy demonstrates your preparedness to conduct independent research and pursue your academic and professional goals.

***Capstone Project Oral Defense*.** The Capstone Project Oral Defense is a formal event where you present your Capstone Project to your committee and other faculty members. The defense allows you to articulate the findings of your applied research project, demonstrate your expertise, and respond to questions and feedback. Successfully defending your project is a key milestone in completing your doctoral program.

***Final Capstone Project Report*.** The Capstone Project Report is a comprehensive document that details your research, methodologies, findings, and conclusions related to your Capstone Project. The report serves as a reflection of your research efforts and showcases your readiness as a scholar-practitioner. It is usually submitted for formal approval to your Capstone Project Committee and may also be shared with broader academic and professional audiences.

**Forms and Processes**

As you progress through the doctoral program, it is essential to document and record academic milestones. The program director will initiate the necessary forms at the appropriate times, as requested by the chair of your capstone project committee. Please note: As the Graduate School transitions its forms from DocuSign to Slate, the list of forms in this section may be subject to revision.

* **Form 1: Capstone Project Committee Form**
	+ - Initiated through the Graduate Student Portal when both the Chair and the second committee member of the committee are full-time faculty members of the UA SSW
	+ However, ***IF*** your second committee member:

1. is a faculty member in another UA academic unit or
2. is from outside of the university community

* The form will be initiated by the PD when the student submits the request via email accompanied by CV/resume, email address, and a sentence or two explanations about how granting this person affiliate graduate faculty status would enhance your capstone project experience.
* **Form 2: Comprehensive Paper Approval Form**
	+ - Initiated by the program director (PD) as a DocuSign form once requested by Chair of Capstone Project Committee.

* **Form 3: Comprehensive and Proficiency Exams**
	+ - Initiated by the PD as a Slate form.
* **Form 4: School of Social Work Plan of Study Form**
	+ - Initiated by the PD as a DocuSign form once Forms 2 and 3 are completed. Uploaded to Slate when Form 5 is initiated.
* **Form 5: Admission to Candidacy Form**
	+ - Initiated by the PD through Slate (with Form 4 uploaded to the form.
* **Form 6: Capstone Approval Form**
	+ - Initiated by the PD as a DocuSign form once the Chair confirms approval of capstone defense.
* **Form 7: Final Defense**
	+ - Initiated by the PD through Slate.

| *Table 1. Timelines, Milestones, Corresponding Forms and Processes* |
| --- |
| **TIMELINE, MILESTONES, FORMS, AND PROCESSES** |
| **Year 1** | **Fall** | Cr. | **Spring** | Cr. | **Summer** | Cr. | **Credits** |
|  | 700  | 3 | 703 or 704  | 3 |  705 | 3 |  |
|  | 701 | 3 | 702 | 3 |  706 | 3 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | 4-Day Residency |  |  |
|  |  | 6 |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| Year 1 Total Credits | 18 |
| Beyond the Classroom: Interview faculty for fit as possible Chair for Comp Paper & Capstone Project Committee |
| **Year 2** | **Fall** |  | **Spring** |  | **Summer** |  |  |
|  | 720 or 730 | 3 | 722 or 732 | 3 | Elective | 3 |  |
|  | 721 or 731 | 3 | Elective[[4]](#footnote-4) | 3 | 751 | 2 |  |
|  | 750 | 1 |  |  | 5-Day Residency |  |  |
| Milestones |  |  | Constitutes Committee |  | Comp Paper Approval |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | Advances to Candidacy |  |  |
| Processes |  |  | Request Grad Status |  |  |  |  |
| Forms |  |  | Initiate Form 1 |  | Initiate Forms 2-4 |  |  |
| Total |  | 7 |  | 6 |  | 5 |  |
| Year 2 Total Credits | 18 |
| Beyond the Classroom: Continue to interview faculty until Chair is selected and committee is constituted. |
| **Year 3** | **Fall** | **Cr** | **Spring** |  | **Summer** | Cr. |  |
|  | 799  | 3 | 799  | 3 | 799  | 3 |  |
| Milestones |  |  |  |  | Defense Announcement |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | Capstone Defended |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | Caps Report Approved |  |  |
| Forms |  |  |  |  | Initiate Forms 5-7 |  |  |
| Total |  | 3 |  | 3 |  | 3 |  |
| Year 3 Total Credits (If student advances to candidacy)  | 9 |
|  **PROGRAM TOTAL (if student advances to candidacy by end of the summer.)** | **45** |
| **or** | 751 | 1 | 799 | 3 | 799 | 3 |  |
|  | Initiate Forms 2-4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total |  | 1 |  | 3 |  | 3 |  |
| Year 3 Total Credits If Comp Paper was NOT Approved at the End of Summer  | 7 |
| **Year 4** | **Fall** | **Cr** | **Spring** | **Cr** | **Summer** | **Cr** |  |
|  | 799  | 3 |  |  |  |  | 3 |
|  | Initiate Forms 5-7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Year 4 Total Credits (if Comp Approved in Fall 2026) | (46) |

**VIII. Supports Available to Students for Research and Conference Participation**

The Graduate School and the SSW provide supplemental funding for graduate research and conference participation to advance students’ research and professional goals. Students are eligible to apply for one conference and one research award per year, defined as fall, spring, and summer semesters. The information provided here is summarized for your convenience but, please note that [Graduate School](https://graduate.ua.edu/applicants/funding/#available-scholarships) (scroll to Conference and Research Funding) policies supersede this summary.

Research awards prioritize capstone research and conference awards and are reserved for graduate students who have been accepted to present their work or chair a session at national or international meetings related to their discipline. Applications are routed through the DSW program and the SSW, which must provide matching funds. The Graduate School provides maximum funding amounts as follows:

* Conferences within North America/Caribbean: up to $500
* International Conferences beyond North America/Caribbean: up to $800
* Research costs within North America/Caribbean: up to $300
* Research costs beyond North America/Caribbean: up to $600

The student’s application must include a budget, information about cost sharing, and, if conference travel is involved, a confirmation that the student will be personally presenting their own work.

Students initiate their requests to the Graduate School by logging in to the [UA Grad Student Portal](https://slate.ua.edu/account/login?r=https%3a%2f%2fslate.ua.edu%2fportal%2fua-grad-student).

**IX. Additional Supports Available to Students**

The University of Alabama has numerous offices, centers, and programs to help graduate students as they complete their degree. Below is a list of centers and programs that students may find helpful as they complete their DSW degree.

Please note: If you are a student who is experiencing a challenge that may impede on educational progress but does not seem to be covered by any resources listed below, please reach out to the DSW Program Director to discuss what additional support may be available.

|  |
| --- |
| Resources for New Students |
| Help with initial steps as a new student at UA | [UA Graduate School New Student Website](https://graduate.ua.edu/students/new-students/)  |
| Support for Completing Graduate School Requirements |
| Graduate Student Deadlines | [UA Graduate School: Student Deadlines](https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/student-deadlines/) |
| Graduate Student Forms | [Forms and Documents](https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/forms-students/) |
| Graduate School Catalog | [UA Graduate School: Catalog](https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/) |
| Support with School-Life Balance |
| Student Care and Well-Being | [Student Care and Well-Being](https://bamacares.sa.ua.edu/) |
| Support for Disability Issues | [Office of Disability Services](http://ods.ua.edu/) |
| Support for Veteran and Military-Connected Students | [Division of Student Life Veteran and Military Affairs](https://vets.sa.ua.edu/)  |
| Resources for Graduate Students Who Are Parents (most resources are on-campus) | [Graduate Parent Support](https://graduate.ua.edu/students/grad-parent-support/) |
| Processes immigration documentation for graduate students and sponsors social and intercultural programming | [The Capstone International Center](https://cis.ua.edu/about/resources/speaking-studio/) |
| Academic Support |
| Academic Support | [Capstone Center for Student Success](https://success.ua.edu/) |
| Support with Writing for Graduate Students | [UA Writing Center](https://writingcenter.ua.edu/graduate/) |
| Research Support  | [UA Libraries](https://www.lib.ua.edu/#/home) |
| Advocacy for Graduate Students |
| Graduate Student Association | [GSA](https://gsa.ua.edu/) |
| Professional and Career Support |
| Career Support | [Division of Student Life Career Center](https://career.sa.ua.edu/) |
| Mentoring for Doctoral Students from Underrepresented Groups | [Tide Together Project](https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/tide-together/) |
| A collection of workshops that prepare students for careers in their field. | [GradACTS](https://graduate.ua.edu/students/gradacts/?utm_campaign=prospect_inquiry&utm_medium=email&utm_source=slate) |
| Works with students, faculty and community partners to improve their public speaking, presentation and oral communication skills. | [The Speaking Studio](https://cis.ua.edu/about/resources/speaking-studio/) |

# APPENDICIES

## Appendix A

## Typical Course of Study for Advanced Clinical Practice Track

|  |
| --- |
| DSW PROGRAM OF STUDY-ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTICE TRACK |
| Year | **Fall Courses** | **Credits** | **Spring Courses** | **Credits** | **Summer Courses** | **Credits** | **Yearly Credits** |
| First Year “Foundation” | SW 700 Advanced Theories on Oppres & Disparities | 3 | SW 703 Neuroscience in Clinical Practice | 3 | SW 705 Advanced Advocacy and Policy Practice | 3 |  |
| SW 701 Research for Clinical and Community Practice I | 3 | SW 702 Research for Clinical and Community Practice II | 3 | SW 706 Teaching Clinical & Admin Social Work | 3 |  |
| Semester Credits |  | **6** |  | **6** |  | **6** | **18** |
| Second Year “Specialization” | SW 720 Clinical Supervision and Ethics  | 3 | SW 722 Assessment & Diagnosis in Evidence Based Clinical Practice | 3 | SW 751 Capstone Prep Independent Study Proposal | 2 |  |
| SW 750 Introduction to Capstone Project | 1 | Elective: SW 723 Complementary & Alt Therapies | 3 | Elective: SW 724 Social Work and Emotional Trauma | 3 |  |
| SW 721 Cognitive Behavioral Therapy | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Semester Credits |  | **7** |  | **6** |  | **5** | **18** |
| Third Year “Capstone” | SW 799 Capstone Project | 3 | SW 799 Capstone Project | 3 | SW 799 Capstone Project | 3 |  |
| Semester Credits |  | **3** |  | **3** |  | **3** | **9** |
| TOTAL PROGRAM CREDITS | **45** |

##

**Appendix B**

Typical Course of Study for Organizational Leadership Track

|  |
| --- |
| DSW PROGRAM OF STUDY- ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRACK |
| Year | **Fall Courses** | **Credits** | **Spring Courses** | **Credits** | **Summer Courses** | **Credits** | **Yearly Credits** |
| First Year “Foundation” | SW 700 Advanced Theories on Oppres & Disparities | 3 | SW 704 Organizational Leadership Theory & Practice | 3 | SW 705 Advanced Advocacy and Policy Practice | 3 |  |
| SW 701 Research for Clinical & Community Practice I | 3 | SW 702 Research for Clinical and Community Practice II | 3 | SW 706 Teaching Clinical & Administrative Social Work | 3 |  |
| Semester Credits |  | **6** |  | **6** |  | **6** | **18** |
| Second Year “Specialization” | SW 731 Leadership in Human Service Program Development | 3 | SW 732 Ethics in Community and Organizational Leadership | 3 | SW 751 Capstone Prep Independent Study Proposal | 2 |  |
| SW 750 Introduction to Capstone Project | 1 | Elective: SW 733 Human Service Finance and Budgeting | 3 | Elective: SW 734 Human Resources in Health & Social Services | 3 |  |
| SW 730 Leadership and Organizational Change | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Semester Credits |  | **7** |  | **6** |  | **5** | **18** |
| Third Year “Capstone” | SW 799 Capstone Project | 3 | SW 799 Capstone Project | 3 | SW 799 Capstone Project | 3 |  |
| Semester Credits |  |  |  |  |  |  | **9** |
| TOTAL PROGRAM CREDITS | **45** |

## Appendix C

## Application and Admission Requirements

Below is a summary of the application and admissions requirements for the DSW Program. The application can be accessed by clicking this link [UA Graduation School Application](https://slate.ua.edu/apply/). Applications must be submitted no later than **March 1 at 11:59 pm CST every year. Only completed applications will be reviewed by the DSW Program Committee.**

| **Application Materials Required by the School of Social Work** |
| --- |
| **An MSW Degree** | * You must have an MSW from a CSWE accredited program to be considered. Master degrees from other disciplines will not be considered for admission.
 |
| **3 Years of Post-MSW Experience** | * Please note that there are no exceptions to this requirement.
* To be considered as three years of post-MSW experience, applicants must have received their MSW degree in August, three years prior to their first semester in the DSW program (e.g. For the fall 2020 cohort, the MSW must have been received during or before August of 2017).
 |
| **Current Social Work Placement** | * You must have a paid or voluntary social work placement where you can apply assignments and your capstone project for the DSW.
 |
| **Potential Interview** | * Applicants may be asked to have a phone interview with a member of the DSW program committee.
 |
| **Application Materials Required by the University Graduate School (UGS)** |
| **Application Fee** | * Graduate School Application plus fee ($65 U.S Residents; $80 International Students).
* Some applicants may be eligible for a waiver of the application fee. Information about waivers can be found under the section “Fee Exemptions” by clicking this link: [Admissions Requirements and Materials](https://live-ua-graduate.pantheonsite.io/applicants/requirements/).
 |
| **Letters of Recommendation** | * Three letters of recommendation are required for all applicants.
* At least two of these letters should come from professional sources (preferably from social workers, but not necessarily).
* One may be an academic source (e.g. former professor or department head).
* Applicants may choose to have all three references come from professional sources if an academic reference is not available.
* All references are due/uploaded by the deadline (March 1st at 11:59 pm CST) for your application to be complete and considered.
 |
| **Transcripts****International Transcripts** | * To avoid delays leading to an incomplete application, uploading unofficial transcripts is acceptable during the application process.
* Upload an unofficial transcript for any institution of higher education at which you have completed 15 or more credit hours.
* If you attended a community college where you completed 15 or more credit hours and later transferred to a different institution to complete your undergraduate degree, the graduate school requires that you also include unofficial transcripts from the community college.
* **All** unofficial transcripts must be uploaded by the deadline (March 1st at 11:59pm) for your application to be complete and considered.
* International applicants: please make sure that your transcript includes a grading schemes. All others: please include a grading scheme if your university does not use a letter-based (e.g. A, A-, B) grading scheme.
* For international applicants from countries other than Canada, you will be required to have your transcripts undergo the [International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service by the Council on Social Work Education.](https://cswe.org/Accreditation/Other/International-Degree-Review.aspx) This must be completed before the deadline of March 1st at 11:59pm.
 |
| **Grade Point Average** | * A grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (overall) in your MSW program.
 |
| **Resume/CV** | * A resume is required for the DSW application. Applicants who are currently working in academic settings may submit an academic CV in place of a traditional business resume.
 |
| **Statement of Purpose** | * UGS requires a Statement of Purpose. However, the UGS general guidelines for writing the Statement of Purpose is different from the SSW’s instructions.
* Instructions for the DSW Statement of Purpose can be found [here.](https://socialwork.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DSW-Statement-of-Purpose-Instructions.pdf)
 |
| **International Applicants** | * Please note that the University Graduate School has additional requirements for international applicants. For additional information click this link: [UA Graduate School International Students](https://graduate.ua.edu/applicants/international-students/).
 |
| **What is NOT Required:** We do not require a GRE score or a separate writing sample apart from the Statement of Purpose. |

1. \* Indicates that the faculty member teaches or has taught in the DSW Program. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ^ Indicates that the faculty member is eligible to serve as Chair of Capstone Project Committees. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)