

MSW Program Admission Requirements and Application Instructions

Admission Requirements

Regular Admission:

An applicant whose credentials meet the following minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) requirement may be considered for regular admission:

- **GPA Standards:** All applicants must have at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) for their overall GPA for their undergraduate degree. If the overall GPA is less than 3.0, applicants can be considered for *Conditional Admittance*. Please see *Conditional Admittance* below for additional details.
- **Application Requirements:** All applications must include a Statement of Purpose, Letters of Recommendation (3), Resume, and Transcripts. Please see the details below.

International Student Admission:

International students must meet the School of Social Work requirements (see above), along with the Graduate School requirements which can be found here: [here](#). This includes the equivalent of a four-year bachelor's degree from an accredited institution.

- **Test Scores:** A student whose first language is not English must submit an official score report for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Pearson test of English (PTE) or must have earned a degree from an accredited U.S. college or university within the past 3 years.
 - a. TOEFL minimum score is 550 on the paper-based test or 79 on the internet-based test.
 - b. IELTS minimum score for admission is a 6.5.
 - c. PTE minimum score for admission is a 59.

Note: Scores must be less than two years old at the time of intended initial enrollment at The University of Alabama.

Application Instructions

1. Determine your program.

Advanced Standing (42-credit hours)

- Students who obtained their Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a CSWE-accredited institution within 10 years of the program start date or those who will have obtained a BSW degree by the start of the MSW Program.

(If prospective students for this program have obtained their BSW degree more than 10 years from the anticipated start date of the program, they can be considered for Conditional Admittance. Please see the details below.)

- The program begins during the summer term **only**.
- All admitted Advanced Standing students, including Distance Learners, must attend the new student in-person orientation scheduled for May on the UA campus.
- Admission to Advanced Standing also requires a "B" average or better in all professional foundation courses, with no more than one "C" in professional courses and grades of "B" or better in practicum (field) education courses.

(If prospective students for the Advanced Standing Program do not meet these specific grade requirements, they can be considered for Conditional Admittance. Please see the details below.)

Traditional Program (60-credit hours)

- Students who hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution.
- The program begins during the fall term **only**.
- All admitted Traditional Program students, including Distance Learners, must attend the new student in-person orientation scheduled for July on the UA campus.
- Applicants who completed their most recent degree more than ten years prior to their anticipated start of the MSW Program may be considered for *Conditional Admission*. Please see the details below.

2. Review requirements for Conditional Admittance.

Conditional Admits for Advanced Standing Program

- Students who obtained their BSW degree more than ten years before their anticipated start to the MSW Advanced Standing Program may be considered for **Conditional Admittance**. In addition to the standard admissions requirements noted (Statement of Purpose, Letters of Recommendation, Resume, and Transcripts) these students must also:

1. Submit a Professional Statement.

Instructions: Submit a 1–2 page, double-spaced statement (Times New Roman, 12-point font) that provides a summary of your professional experience in social work or related fields since completing your previous degree.

Your statement should include:

- An overview of your work experience in social work, human services, or related settings.
- Any professional development or continuing education you have pursued, such as licensures, certifications, workshops, trainings, or conferences related to the social work profession.

- Any trainings, workshops, and/or presentations that you have facilitated related to the social work profession.

2. Submit a Technology Statement.

Instructions: Submit a 1–2 page, double-spaced statement (Times New Roman, 12-point font) describing your experience using technology since completing your most recent academic degree.

Your statement should include:

- Experience with online learning platforms (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas, etc.) or virtual training sessions.
 - Familiarity with videoconferencing tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet) for meetings, supervision, or service delivery.
 - Use of productivity tools such as Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, or Google Workspace.
 - Experience with any technology used in social work practice, such as electronic health records (EHR), case management systems, or telehealth platforms.
 - A brief reflection on your comfort level with learning and using new technologies, and how you plan to stay engaged in a technology-supported learning environment.
- Students with a BSW and a GPA ranging from 2.5 to 2.99 (on a 4.0 scale) or those who don't meet the specific social work course grade requirements noted above may be considered for **Conditional Admittance** for the MSW Advanced Standing Program. In addition to the standard admissions requirements noted (Statement of Purpose, Letters of Recommendation, Resume, and Transcripts), these students must also:

1. Submit an Academic Success Plan.

Instructions: Submit a 1–2 page, double-spaced statement (Times New Roman, 12-point font) describing your plan to achieve academic success in graduate school.

Your statement should include:

- Reflection on past academic challenges: Briefly explain any factors that may have contributed to your lower GPA.
- Lessons learned and changes made: Describe what you've learned from those experiences and how you have grown since that time, including personally, academically, and professionally.
- Plan for graduate-level success: Outline strategies you will use to succeed in a rigorous academic environment.

Note: If an Advanced Standing applicant does not successfully meet the above requirements for Regular or Conditional Admittance, they may be considered for the Traditional MSW Program.

Conditional Admits for Traditional Program

- Students who completed their most recent degree more than ten years before their anticipated start to the MSW Traditional Program may be considered for **Conditional Admittance**. In addition to the standard admissions requirements noted (Statement of Purpose, Letters of Recommendation, Resume, and Transcripts) these students must also:

1. Submit a Technology Statement.

Instructions: Submit a 1–2 page, double-spaced statement (Times New Roman, 12-point font) describing your experience using technology since completing your most recent academic degree.

Your statement should include:

- Experience with online learning platforms (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, etc.) or virtual training sessions.
 - Familiarity with videoconferencing tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet) for meetings, supervision, or service delivery.
 - Use of productivity tools such as Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, or Google Workspace.
 - Experience with any technology used in social work practice, such as electronic health records (EHR), case management systems, or telehealth platforms.
 - A brief reflection on your comfort level with learning and using new technologies, and how you plan to stay engaged in a technology-supported learning environment.
- Students with an undergraduate GPA ranging from 2.5 to 2.99 (on a 4.0 scale) may be considered for **Conditional Admittance** for the MSW Traditional Program. In addition to the standard admissions requirements noted (Statement of Purpose, Letters of Recommendation, Resume, and Transcripts), these students must also:

1. Submit an Academic Success Plan.

Instructions: Submit a 1–2 page, double-spaced statement (Times New Roman, 12-point font) describing your plan to achieve academic success in graduate school.

Your statement should include:

- Reflection on past academic challenges: Briefly explain any factors that may have contributed to your lower GPA.
- Lessons learned and changes made: Describe what you've learned from those experiences and how you have grown since that time—personally, academically, and professionally.
- Plan for graduate-level success: Outline strategies you will use to succeed in a rigorous academic environment

3. Choose your preferred program format.

- Review the MSW Program [website](#) for additional information about the program.
- Check MSW program start dates for program options.
- Decide between main campus or online (distance learning).

4. Begin your online application and select the application type.

- Access at graduate.ua.edu
 - a. Select "Prospective Student"
 - b. Select "Apply Now"
 - c. Select the admission term
 - d. Remember to select your campus under the "Program of Study" link.

Note: Make sure you select the correct campus type; applications cannot be changed once they are submitted.

5. Complete Statement of Purpose Reflecting on Code of Ethics and Accreditation Standards for application submission.

All students are required to submit a Statement of Purpose (SOP) with their application.

Social work professionals address the complex needs of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, emphasizing the needs and empowerment of people who are marginalized, oppressed, and living in poverty. They are bound by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) [Code of Ethics](#) that guides their professional behavior. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) also sets Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards ([EPAS](#)) for the UA MSW Program including identifying competencies that articulate the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that comprise social work practice. Specifically, CSWE EPAS emphasize nine competencies including the following:

- “Social workers advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels; and engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.”
- “Social workers demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels and demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.”

The UA MSW Program is looking for individuals who exhibit strong potential for developing professional competence, understand and can apply social work core values to education and practice, and have demonstrated academic promise to be able to perform successfully at the graduate level. Faculty members will evaluate students' qualifications for a professional education in social work and the appropriateness of the MSW Program for their educational needs and goals.

SOP Format and Length:

- Include a title and references page
- 4-5 double-spaced pages **not** including title and references pages
- 12-point font with one-inch margins
- APA format

SOP Content:

Your essay should address the following questions and statements:

- a. **What inspires you to pursue a graduate degree in social work, and what motivates you to enter the social work profession?** Reflect on your personal, academic, or professional journey that led you to this path.
- b. **Describe your experiences or interests related to working with underserved or marginalized communities.** How do these experiences reflect your commitment to the values and ethics outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics and CSWE Accreditation Standards noted above?
- c. **Explain your understanding of social and economic justice.** How do these concepts connect to your goals in social work and the core values of the profession?
- d. **Discuss your personal strengths and qualities that demonstrate your potential to become a skilled and ethical social worker.** Include any relevant personal or professional experiences that support your readiness for this role.
- e. **Describe how you expect graduate-level education to differ from your undergraduate experience.** How do you plan to manage the academic and personal demands of graduate school? What support systems, resources, and/or tools will you rely on to help you succeed?

Helpful Tips:

- Before you begin writing, please consider the following strategies:
 - Reflect on your educational and professional goals and evaluate your expectations regarding the MSW Program and your professional future.
 - Review and reflect on the NASW Code of Ethics and reflect on the social work values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

- Review and reflect on the Nine Core Competencies described in the CSWE EPAS.
- Review and reflect on the required questions and statements ensuring that you address each one completely and concisely.

Reviewer's Expectations:

- All statements should be written in APA format.
- All statements should properly cite the NASW Code of Ethics and CSWE EPAS along with any additional references as appropriate.
- All statements should follow the 4-5 double-spaced page requirements.
- All statements should reflect strong written communication skills (grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, clarity, and organization).
- All statements should be the student's original work.

6. Update resume for application submission.

All students are required to submit an updated resume with their program application. Resume should reflect your education, professional experience, community service, campus and community involvement, and any additional details that demonstrate your readiness for graduate school and the social work profession.

Reviewer's Expectations:

- All resumes should reflect strong written communication skills (grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, and organization).

7. Request three letters of recommendation for application submission.

- A total of **three** letters of recommendation from academic and professional recommenders are required. Letters of recommendation should be provided by individuals who can offer a well-informed assessment of your readiness for graduate-level education and your potential for professional success in advanced social work practice. These letters should come from professors, supervisors, and/or professionals who are familiar with your academic abilities, work ethic, interpersonal skills, and commitment to the values of the social work profession.
- If you earned your undergraduate degree within the last five years, choose at least one academic reference; a professor from your major is ideal.
- If you earned your undergraduate degree more than five years ago, choose at least one academic reference if one is available. You may, however, substitute this for a recommendation from an employer.

- If you have earned your BSW or are in the process of completing your BSW, please submit one of your three letters of recommendation from your practicum/internship supervisor.
- If you have done extensive volunteer work, you may choose at least one person who has supervised your volunteer work.
- Enter the email addresses of each reference on the graduate school application. References will be sent a link once the application is submitted.

Helpful Tips:

- Be sure to reach out to each recommender individually. Ask them if they would be willing to provide you with a strong recommendation and address all the noted requirements above. Be sure to provide them with a copy of your resume for review.
- Letters from former professors or instructors and employers, especially ones from social service settings, are preferred.
- Personal or character references from family members, friends, neighbors, clergy, etc. are not appropriate and should not be used.
- Letters should be submitted on letterhead, addressed, and dated appropriately.

8. Upload transcripts for application submission.

For each institution of higher education (including community colleges) at which you have completed 15 or more credit hours, obtain an unofficial transcript and upload it during the application process. Official transcripts should only be submitted after admission. Please note:

- If you upload a digital transcript obtained directly from your registrar's office, please ensure that the file does not expire.
- You do not need to submit University of Alabama transcripts.
- If admitted, degree-seeking applicants will be required to request that official transcripts be sent directly from your institution(s) prior to enrollment. Electronic transcripts should be sent to grad.transcripts@ua.edu

Note: Official transcripts sent from the undergraduate institution will be required 6 weeks after the first day of classes during the admitted term.

9. Ensure all application materials are submitted.

Review all the requirements above and ensure you have included all materials. Applications will only be reviewed when all materials have been submitted.