



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

MSSW Personal Statement

Summer & Fall 2023

As part of your application to the MSSW program you are required to submit a personal statement that addresses the key areas described below. The MSSW Admissions Committee considers your personal statement to be an essential part of your application. Your content, critical thinking, and writing style will provide important information about your understanding of the goals and values of the social work profession and your ability to successfully engage in graduate level education. You will have an opportunity to describe your interest and motivation for becoming a professional social worker, as well as your understanding of the concepts and guiding principles associated with the profession. Please note that your personal statement is also considered a writing sample and is reviewed for content and writing quality.

You will answer the following questions within the online Graduate Admissions application.

1. Your Goals *(300 word limit)*

- a) Why do you want to be a master's level social worker? What are some of your professional goals? How you will use your MSSW to enhance the well-being of those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed?
- b) As social workers we are committed to evaluating our beliefs, actions and knowledge base to ensure we are continuing to grow as professionals. This continual evaluation requires us to engage in self-reflection, humility, learning and accountability. What is your commitment to self-reflection and lifelong learning?

2. UT MSSW Mission, Vision, and Values *(300 word limit)*

How do the mission, vision, and values of the MSSW program at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work fit with your career goals? <https://www.csw.utk.edu/about-the-college/>

3. **NASW Code of Ethics & Personal Values** (300 word limit)

The NASW Code of Ethics, which defines clients as individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, includes the following statement: *“Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients’ socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients’ interests and the broader society’s interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession”.*

- a) What personal qualities do you possess that will allow you to contribute to the social work profession, including values and ethics of the profession?
- b) Discuss how your personal values and beliefs are or are not compatible with this professional standard. How will you reconcile any conflicts between your personal values and the requirements of the profession?

4. **Social Concern** (500 word limit)

Concisely describe what you consider to be a major social problem. Address the following areas:

- a) key societal and other factors that contribute to the problem (include source citations)
- b) your recommendations to solve the problem
- c) challenges, including ethical dilemmas, which might arise in seeking to solve the problem
- d) if relevant, personal experiences that have contributed to your interest in this social problem

5. **Field Practice** (300 word limit)

The field practicum is an integral component of social work education, requiring a substantial time commitment. As a social work student, you will be expected to plan your schedule in order to meet all of your degree requirements, including field. Students in the full time or extended study program will complete a minimum of 1000 clock hours in placement, as well as a required seminar. Advanced standing students will complete a minimum of 600 clock hours in placement, including a required seminar. Field placements that include evening and weekend hours are **extremely limited** and availability is not guaranteed; therefore, students should plan to be in field practice during weekday, business hours. Students will be in field practice 2 days per week for their generalist practicum and 2-3 days per week (depending on program of study) for their concentration practicum.

Understanding the amount of time required for field and that graduate courses require 3x the time of in-class instruction for studying (for example, you will need 12 hours a

week to attend and study for a 3 hour course), how do you plan to manage the rigorous demands of coursework and field practice during graduate study? Please take into consideration your expected time commitments while enrolled in the program (i.e. employment, caregiver responsibilities, field practicum, class time, study time, etc.)

6. Applicants to the Online MSSW Program (300 word limit) *Do not answer this question if you are applying to the Knoxville or Nashville on-campus programs.*

The online MSSW program at UTK is designed to meet the needs of nontraditional students. Most synchronous classes are held sparingly throughout the semester and during the late afternoon/evening hours. The online program is uniquely different than face to face learning where students meet each week, because of that a fully online graduate program can create unique challenges and opportunities for students.

Describe prior experiences you have had with online learning. Briefly describe your planned academic success strategies for asynchronous learning including personal time-management.

7. Additional Information (300 word limit)

Answer **one** of the following questions for the MSSW Admissions Committee to consider in formulating recommendations concerning your admission.

- a) Do you have any extenuating circumstances which may have affected your past academic performance? Describe any challenges or barriers that you have faced in your pursuit of higher education. What motivated you to persist, and how did you overcome them? How will you address any challenges faced in Graduate School?
- b) Are there educational, personal, cultural, economic, or social experiences that have shaped your academic journey? If so, please describe them. Have any of these experiences provided unique a perspective that would contribute to the graduate social work program and the social work profession?
- c) As a College of Social Work committed to the core values of our profession, we affirm the inherent dignity and worth of ALL persons. We are committed to assuming a leadership role in challenging racism at both the personal and societal levels and committed to anti-racism and social justice. Cultural relevance and sensitivity to the personal, social, economic, and political needs of vulnerable high-risk groups are emphasized in the education, research, and service of our students and faculty. Describe how your life experiences and/or educational background have informed your understanding of the barriers facing groups that are underrepresented in higher education. How have you been actively engaged in programs or activities focused on anti-racist/social justice initiatives? How do you see yourself contributing to diversity in your profession after you earn your advanced degree at UTK?

The College of Social Work and the University of Tennessee welcome and honor all people. In accordance with the U.S. National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the U.S. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement), “the dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including” age, class, color, culture, mental or physical disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, immigration status, marital status, national origin, political ideology, race, regionality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. The College values intellectual curiosity, pursuit of knowledge, and academic freedom and integrity. “A person’s diverse life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim” (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement). The College of Social Work promotes social justice and social change, and strives to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

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