



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

2021-

2022

PhD

Student

Handbook

*Revised August 2021*

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## WELCOME FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Congratulations on your acceptance into the PhD program and welcome to the University of Tennessee College of Social Work!

Obtaining a PhD is an exciting experience. During your PhD program, you will often be asked to reach outside of your comfort zone as you contribute to the development of new knowledge for the purpose of helping to solve some of society's most pressing problems. I believe you will find it is very rewarding to be part of the process of generating research results that can be used to better the lives of others.

As your PhD program director, I am here to support you through this unique journey. As such, I join all of the faculty and staff here at the College who are also available to assist, teach, and mentor you as you move through your PhD program. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly ([geely@utk.edu](mailto:geely@utk.edu)) with any questions or concerns. You can contact our program assistant, Ms. Sarah Browning ([sbrowni2@utk.edu](mailto:sbrowni2@utk.edu)) for help, as well.

We are thrilled that you have chosen the University of Tennessee College of Social Work for your PhD program. Welcome again to the College and Go Vols!

Sincerely,

Gretchen E. Ely, PhD, MSW  
Professor, PhD Program Director

# COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

## College Mission

Grounded in social justice, we equip professional social workers with the skills needed to serve diverse and vulnerable populations. We build knowledge by conducting groundbreaking research that focuses on solving social problems. We engage with our communities through meaningful service.

## College Vision

We envision a socially just world that prioritizes the needs of the most vulnerable.

## College Values

*Human Dignity:* Commitment to promote social and economic equity

*Responsive Education and Research:* Critically informed and practice-relevant professional formation

*Engagement:* Collaboration with communities to achieve and sustain well-being

# INTRODUCTION FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The purpose of this manual is to provide information concerning the PhD program in Social Work. While an attempt has been made to be thorough, the manual is neither exhaustive nor is the accuracy of information in this handbook assured since policies can change between revisions of this handbook. The definitive guide for graduate students is the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) Graduate Catalog. In addition to regularly reviewing this handbook, please make sure to review the University level graduate catalog regularly.

**Graduate students are expected to be aware of all regulations governing their work and study at the university. This means that it is the student's responsibility to become familiar not only with this manual but with the current UTK Graduate Catalog as well.**

The student should always verify any information regarding college and university policy with the current handbook and the current catalog. If information is unavailable or lacks clarity, the student should ask the PhD Program Director, the doctoral programs assistant, or their dissertation committee chair.

Many rules and regulations govern a student's progress through the PhD program. For the most part, requirements and deadlines are firm with few if any exceptions allowed. However, there may be extenuating circumstances which justify modification of these requirements and deadlines. If a student feels that special consideration should be given to their situation, they should discuss the matter with their dissertation committee chair or PhD Program Director, who can help determine whether or not the PhD program committee or the Graduate School should be petitioned.

## THE PHD PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

The purpose of social work education at the PhD level is to develop an understanding and appreciation of the scientific method so that graduates can improve and extend the knowledge base of social work practice, and inform social policy, through empirical research. Graduates of PhD programs assume leadership roles in social work education, research, and practice.

The PhD program in social work provides training in social and behavioral science research methods and the opportunity for students to apply these methods to social problems and social work practice areas. PhD research is directed toward developing knowledge that can be used by social work educators, practitioners, administrators, and policy makers.

Graduates of the PhD program are prepared to contribute to the improvement of the design and implementation of social services and to develop and disseminate social work knowledge through research and teaching. Students also have the opportunity and are encouraged to obtain a minor in statistics through the Intercollegiate Graduate Statistics Program (IGSP) (<http://igsp.bus.utk.edu/about.asp>).

Upon completion of the PhD program, students are expected to meet the following program competencies:

- Demonstrate expert knowledge in a focused substantive area relevant to social work.
- Conduct independent and original scientific research that advances knowledge in a substantive area.
- Communicate scientific findings in an effective way to a range of audiences (from lay persons to other scientists).
- Learn how to secure funding to support a substantive research agenda.
- Teach students the knowledge, skills, and values they need to be proficient social workers in a substantive area.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are expected to be familiar with and follow the regulations and requirements outlined in this manual and in the current UTK Graduate Catalog. Though program staff may periodically notify students of deadlines or catalog changes, etc., **it is ultimately the student's responsibility to fulfill requirements and meet deadlines.**

Students receiving graduate assistantships are expected to diligently fulfill the work expectations of their award. In the College of Social Work, these are typically **25% FTE** appointments which correspond to an expectation of approximately **10 hours of work per week**. Assistantship duties will vary, and are determined by the student's faculty supervisor in conjunction with the student.

Assistantships are granted for periods of one academic year and will be renewed assuming funds are available and the student's performance meets the program's expectations. Each student will be assigned a faculty supervisor to whom the student will report for assignments. The student should review the university's policies on the administration of graduate assistantships. Additional information is in the current UTK Graduate Catalog and in the relevant section further below.

Students have the responsibility of being informed of University policies and procedures as described in the current [UTK Graduate Catalog](#), [Hilltopics](#), and other periodic official updates from [the Graduate School](#) and the PhD program office.

**The scheduling of examinations (particularly comprehensive examinations and dissertation defenses) is the student's responsibility, as is registration and reporting to the Graduate School.**

Students are expected to attend classes, complete assignments on time, and participate actively in class discussions.

**Students are also expected to attend and participate in events of the College of Social Work to which PhD students are invited as often as possible.** These events (e.g., workshops, professional development trainings, "job talks" by faculty candidates, receptions with faculty and students) provide valuable opportunities for professional development, scholarly growth, and networking with colleagues and peers.

## **Ethical, Academic, and Professional Conduct**

Students in a graduate program in social work are simultaneously participating in both academic and professional worlds. This means that the students' behavior must be governed by the norms of academia and professional social work practice, including the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and the behavioral guidelines in [Hilltopics](#).

### **Academic Conduct**

The purpose of the academic environment is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to develop and disseminate knowledge. Earning a degree, such as the PhD, is in part an assessment by the faculty that these purposes have been accomplished. Such an assessment means that a student is committed to the pursuit of knowledge and to an understanding of its meaning. Consequently, plagiarism, or any other form of cheating, is harmful to this purpose and is grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.

Graduate students are expected to understand the proper use and referencing of the material of others in their own written work and to comply with academic standards in this regard. Guidelines for proper referencing and citations can be found in the current [Style Guide of the American Psychological Association](#).

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all members of the academic community. An honor statement is included on the online application for admission and readmission. Submitting the application acknowledges that adherence is confirmed. The honor statement declares:

*An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.*

The university expects that all academic work will provide an honest reflection of the knowledge and abilities of both students and faculty. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of data, providing unauthorized help, and other acts of academic dishonesty are reprehensible to the purposes for which the university exists.

## Professional Conduct

In addition to maintaining acceptable academic standards, students must conduct themselves in a professionally ethical manner towards their student colleagues, faculty, and all other persons. Because membership in a profession implies an encompassing set of values, professional conduct is expected at all times, on-campus and off-campus, including at professional conferences.

The college subscribes to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#). Students are advised to familiarize themselves with its provisions. **Any act by the student that would constitute unethical practice or a violation of law, whether committed in college-related activities or not, is grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.**

## Advising

Each new student will be advised by the Program Director and/or faculty GRA supervisor until such time as the student is ready to choose a chair for their dissertation committee.

## Student Records

Any student wishing to see their records may request to do so through the PhD Program Director. Exceptions to this right are reference letters if the student has previously waived their right to read the letters.

## Student Appeal Process

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Tennessee's Standards of Conduct. These standards prohibit all forms of academic dishonesty and other misconduct. The process for handling alleged violations of the University's standards of conduct, the range of possible penalties, and the related appeal process are published in [Hilltopics](#), the UTK student handbook.

The College of Social Work maintains additional Standards of Professional Conduct. These standards address the cognitive, emotional, and character requirements that are necessary for the professional practice of social work. These standards are described in the College's Professional Conduct Policy (see **Appendix A**). This policy also outlines the process when violations of these standards are alleged as well as the appeal process after decisions are made concerning the allegations.

Students with grievances concerning grades should file a formal complaint with the Graduate Council through the Graduate Council Appeals Committee, but only after grievances have been duly processed,

without resolution, through the College of Social Work's appeals procedure (outlined below). As described in [Hilltopics](#), students may appeal grades only based on one or more of the following allowable grounds:

- A clearly unfair decision (such as lack of consideration of circumstances clearly beyond the control of the student, e.g., a death in the family, illness, or accident);
- Unacceptable instruction/evaluation procedures (such as deviation from stated policies on grading criteria, incompletes, late paper examinations, or class attendance);
- Inability of the instructor to deal with course responsibilities; or
- An exam setting which makes concentration extremely difficult

An appeal based solely on a difference of opinion regarding the substance or quality of the student's performance is not a sufficient basis. The initial grade appeal must be filed no later than 30 days after the final grade has been issued. To appeal a grade in the College of Social Work, students must follow these steps:

- A student is instructed to begin the process by first appealing in writing directly to the course instructor regarding the final grade. The written appeal should articulate the allowable grounds by which the grade is being appealed (see list above).
- If no resolution is reached, then the student may initiate the formal appeal process through a letter to the Program Director. The course instructor should respond in writing to the student appeal and this response must be included with the student's letter to the Program Director. This appeal must be submitted to the Program Director no later than 14 days after receiving a written response from the course instructor.
- If the matter is not resolved at the Program Director level, the student may then appeal in writing to the Associate Dean for Academics of the College of Social Work.
- If the matter is not resolved with the Associate Dean for Academics, the student may then appeal in writing to the Dean of the College of Social Work. Appeals to the Associate Dean for Academics and Dean must be submitted no later than 14 days after receiving a written response from the Program Director and Associate Dean for Academics, respectively.
- If the matter is not resolved at the college level, the student may write an appeal letter to the Graduate Council Appeal Committee. Please consult the university's Graduate Catalog or the Graduate School's Graduate Council Appeal Procedure for more information:  
<https://gradschool.utk.edu/documents/2016/02/student-appeals-procedures.pdf/>

## **Student Representative**

PhD students annually elect one representative to serve on the PhD program committee. This committee is the academic policy setting body for the PhD program. The student representative is a voting member.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE UTK COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville is the official land-grant institution for the state. It is a comprehensive institution offering a wide variety of graduate and undergraduate programs. The UTK College of Social Work has four academic programs (BSW, MSSW, DSW and PhD) as well as a Social Work Office of Research and Public Service and a Center for Behavioral Health Research. The MSSW is also obtainable at the Nashville campus of the UTK College of Social Work and online.

Though a PhD student's foundation coursework and electives must be completed at the Knoxville campus, the student's graduate research assistantships, practica, and dissertation research may be done with faculty at the Nashville campus. Remote faculty members sometimes teach courses in the PhD program using virtual conferencing options, so students should expect to work with course instructors in this format, as well.

## **Student Offices**

Students have access to a common PhD student office which is available on a daily, first come, first served basis. By university policy, students may not have any personal appliances, including refrigerators, coffeepots, or heaters in any office. If you have questions about this policy, ask the PhD Program Assistant or the PhD Program Director.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Expenses and Financial Assistance**

The fees and tuition can be found in the current UTK Graduate Catalog. Fees and tuition are a significant part of the cost of a student's education. While these fees and/or tuition may be waived for graduate assistants on a 25% FTE or higher appointment, the length of time that the program can support a particular graduate student is currently four years.

Graduate students may request financial aid from the central university Financial Aid Office and the Graduate School.

Information regarding Graduate School Fellowships, Graduate School Fellowships, and Student Loans can be found here: <http://gradschool.utk.edu/graduate-student-life/costs-funding/Students> in field practice can be sued for malpractice. Therefore, participation in a group plan for professional liability insurance is required by the College for all students enrolled in field practice courses. The cost of this insurance varies according to the charges made by the University's insurance carrier. An effort is made

to obtain the most economical coverage possible. An explanation of specific coverage is available from the coordinator of field services at the respective campus. Students are required to make payment for liability insurance; the charge is billed on the VOLXpress statement when due.

## Travel Support

The College of Social Work has budgeted \$1,500 in travel funds per academic year for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year PhD students to use for traveling to conferences at which they are presenting. Students in their 1<sup>st</sup> year will have \$250 in travel funds to attend conferences, whether they are presenting or not. **To receive travel support, students must follow the procedures outlined in Appendix B.**

**Note:** The PhD program is committed to supporting professional travel for PhD students at the levels outlined above. However, the level of support for PhD travel can change based on the College's budget. Information about current travel support will be provided to PhD students at the beginning of each fall semester. Due to COVID-19, availability of travel funds for students will depend on budgetary decisions of the College and University. The doctoral programs assistant can provide information and answer questions about travel support.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Every graduate student should check their records periodically with the Office of Graduate Admissions to be sure that no errors have been incorporated into these official records and to determine that there are no deficiencies in the requirements for the degree being sought. For example, it is easy for a student to forget about an "I" (Incomplete) grade and then find during the semester in which candidacy is sought that work must be completed to remove that grade or that a professor must be located to affirm that work was completed. There are several requirements which must be satisfied by all graduate students. Please check the UTK Graduate Catalog for a complete, up-to-date list of requirements.

### Admission Requirements

Admission to the PhD program is based on the following requirements:

1. Admission by the Graduate School
2. Admission by the College of Social Work

## SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR PHD IN SOCIAL WORK

- 1. Minimum number of credit-hours, residency requirements, and GPA.** The student must complete 67 semester hours beyond the Master's degree. This includes 34 hours of required coursework, 9 hours of advanced electives, and a minimum of 24 hours of dissertation research (SW600).

The residency requirement for PhD students is a minimum of two consecutive semesters of full-time registration. **Once a student begins taking SW600 (dissertation hours), they must continuously take SW600 until completion of the dissertation (this includes enrolling in summer dissertation hours).**

Transfer of credit for an elective course taken at another university for graduate credit may be allowed provided that the final grade was "B" or better and prior approval is obtained from the Program Director and the vice provost and dean of the Graduate School. No more than two electives may be taken at another university. No courses taken at other universities may be substituted for social work PhD required courses without prior approval of the PhD Program Committee.

A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation from the UTK CSW PhD program.

2. **Appointment and approval of PhD (i.e., dissertation) committee.** This must be done prior to completion of the comprehensive exam. Committee appointments require the approval of the PhD Program Director and review by the Graduate School. On the Graduate School forms for the PhD committee, the required signature of "Department Head" refers to the PhD Program Director at the College of Social Work. See details in the "Student PhD Committee Composition and Procedures" section further below. Please seek assistance from the doctoral programs assistant when completing the dissertation committee form (or any forms required for the program).
3. **Passing of the comprehensive examination (scholarly paper, dissertation proposal and presentation).** The comprehensive examination, which also counts as your dissertation proposal defense, should be completed only after all required coursework and electives have been completed. The college requires that that defense and acceptance of the dissertation proposal occur **prior** to beginning actual work on the dissertation research itself.
4. **Admission to candidacy.** Request for admission to candidacy must be submitted by each student working on a graduate degree. The request for admission to candidacy may **not** be submitted until after the comprehensive examination has been passed. **PhD students must apply for admission to candidacy at least one semester before graduation. Failure to do this could delay graduation.** Please seek assistance from the doctoral programs assistant when filling out this, and any required forms.
5. **Acceptance and defense of dissertation.** After the student's committee has received the written dissertation, the student must schedule an oral defense of the dissertation.

Final oral defense of the dissertation must also be scheduled with your Graduation Specialist at the Graduate School. The student should consult their advisor and the staff support each semester for the final dates for scheduling and holding such examinations.

**Note:** There are two deadlines. Meeting the first deadline will allow the student to graduate the semester that the dissertation is defended. Meeting the second deadline will allow the student to graduate the following semester without having to register for that semester. This can prevent the student from having to pay registration fees for that semester. Again, the student should consult the Graduate School calendar for dates.

6. **Applying to graduate.** Students must apply to graduate, so do not overlook this important step.

- 7. Approval and acceptance of the final copy of the dissertation by the Graduate School.** The final copy of the dissertation should be submitted after the final oral examination but not later than two weeks prior to Commencement (see the Graduate School deadline dates for each semester's specific deadlines). However, the student should begin working with the Thesis/Dissertation consultant much earlier. Specific information on the Approval Sheet and on the copies of the final version of the dissertation that need to be submitted to the university can be found at the link: <https://gradschool.utk.edu/thesesdissertations/>. All copies of the dissertation submitted to the university are electronic; the university no longer accepts paper copies of the dissertation.

Note: The process of getting the dissertation formatted properly for The Graduate School can be time consuming, so please make sure to begin this process early, so as not to delay graduation.

- 8. Payment of all fees, fines, etc., and removal of any incompletes.**
- 9. Miscellaneous procedures for forms. Please seek assistance from the doctoral programs assistant any time you need to fill out and submit a required form.** Some forms are to be submitted only to the College of Social Work PhD Program office. Others must also be submitted to the Graduate School. Necessary forms should be completed by the student prior to meetings. All forms should be processed through the PhD program office to assure that they are completed accurately and according to deadlines. See **Appendix C** for links to Graduate School and College of Social Work form repositories.

## **COURSEWORK, EXAMINATION, AND DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS**

- 1. Completion of required foundation courses (34 hours).** The following required courses should be completed by the end of the spring semester of the first year for most full-time students: SW601, SW605, SW626, SW628, SW602, SW608, SW606, and SW630. The following required courses should be completed by the end of the spring semester of the second year for most full-time students: SW603, SW675, and SW680. SW677 (Teaching Practicum I) and SW678 (Teaching Practicum II) are typically completed during, but may be completed after, the student's second year. During the second year, students should also take a three-hour credit statistics elective outside of the College. These courses total 34 hours of required coursework.
  - Note:** Teaching Practica-Students can research potential faculty members for the teaching practica using the faculty bio pages. Students are responsible for securing their own mentor for both of the teaching practica courses.
- 2. Completion of 9 elective hours.** The 9 elective hours should relate to advanced research methods, advanced statistics, or the student's substantive research area. Any elective hours taken in within social work must be at the 600 level; elective courses outside the college may be either 500 or 600

level courses.

3. **Completion of comprehensive examination.** By university policy, the comprehensive examination (i.e. dissertation proposal defense) must be completed and accepted **within five years of initial enrollment** in the PhD program.
4. **Admission to Candidacy application.** The Admission to Candidacy form should be prepared in conjunction with the doctoral programs assistant, who will work with the student to obtain the required signatures and submit the form to the Graduate School for approval. The admission to candidacy form indicates that the student has passed the comprehensive examination and specifies the courses taken. **It must be submitted at least one semester prior to graduation.**
5. **Commencement of SW600.** The student should begin taking SW600 (dissertation hours) once ready to start work toward the comprehensive exam. Once a student begins registering for SW600, registration must be continuous (for a minimum of 3 hours per semester), including summers, until the dissertation is completed unless the student requests a leave of absence. A leave of absence may be granted only for semesters during which the student will not be using university facilities.
6. **Leave of absence.** A request for a leave of absence should indicate the reason for the leave and stipulate that the student will not be using university facilities. It must be submitted to the PhD Program Director. If the director approves the request, they will submit the request to the Dean of the Graduate School, who must also approve the leave. The request should be made in advance. **Approval is neither automatic nor guaranteed.**

The Graduate School limits the number of leaves of absence that a student may take during their PhD program to six semesters. The fees for **any** un-enrolled semesters will be billed to the student retroactively and must be paid before the student will be allowed to graduate.

7. **Time limit to graduation.** There is an eight-year time limit for finishing the program from initial enrollment to graduation. Leaves of absence do not extend this eight-year limit.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

1. **Completion and approval of dissertation proposal.** Students will work with the doctoral programs assistant to obtain the committee signatures indicating that the committee has approved the dissertation proposal, which will then be approved by the PhD Program Director and sent to the Graduate School for approval. At this point or sometime in the very near future, the student should contact the Thesis/Dissertation Consultant: <https://gradschool.utk.edu/thesesdissertations/> or by e-mail here: [thesis@utk.edu](mailto:thesis@utk.edu)

2. **Completion of the dissertation research and the dissertation document under the direction of the student's PhD committee.**
3. **Apply to graduate and pay the graduation fee.**
4. **Submission of final draft of dissertation to members of PhD committee.** This must occur at least two weeks prior to the final oral defense of the dissertation.
5. **Scheduling of final oral defense of dissertation with the Graduate School by notifying your Graduation Specialist.** The student must schedule the final oral defense of their dissertation at least one week prior to the actual date of the final oral defense. Please make sure the doctoral programs assistant is involved in this process.
6. **Final oral defense of dissertation with PhD committee.** The defense must be scheduled to occur not later than four weeks prior to Commencement. The actual deadline is available at registration.

**A Pass/Fail Form for the oral defense will be sent to the chair of the student's dissertation committee prior to the oral defense after the request to schedule the defense has been submitted.** This form should be signed and dated **immediately** after completion of the oral defense assuming the defense is successful. If the committee chooses to withhold signatures until changes are made (which should be minor at this point), then the student should be sure to ascertain when and where committee members can be reached for obtaining the final signatures. Please seek guidance from the doctoral programs assistance around completing this form.

7. **Approval and acceptance of final copy of dissertation and PhD forms by the PhD committee and the Graduate School, respectively.** Approval and acceptance follow the final oral examination. The final copy of the dissertation must be submitted to Trace by the deadline on the Graduate School calendar.
8. **Removal of incompletes.** Incompletes must be removed by the instructor according to the deadline specified in the Graduate School calendar.

## REGISTRATION FOR COURSES

All students are required to register online within their respective MyUTK accounts. Registration instructions can be found here: <http://onestop.utk.edu/class-registration/> .

Except for first-semester graduate students, all students are expected to pre-register for courses during the period reserved for that purpose. The university imposes a penalty fee for failure to pre-register. The reason for pre-registration is to allow sufficient time for the department to adjust its teaching loads and

course offerings in the event that certain courses do not have large enough enrollments to justify their being offered.

The normal maximum course load for graduate students is 15 hours per semester with 9 hours considered full-time. Students may petition the Graduate School to take up to 18 hours. For summer terms, the course load limits apply to the combined number of hours taken during the various summer sessions.

Students should be aware that the Graduate School requires them to register continuously for at least 3 credit-hours of **SW600** once they begin their dissertation research. This continuous registration is required even if the student leaves the campus, and it can be a significant financial burden, especially for out-of-state students. If students on approved leave of absence need to use faculty time and/or university facilities, they must terminate their leave by registering for a minimum of 3 dissertation hours for that semester. **All PhD students are advised to complete all other requirements for their PhD degree before leaving the campus/State.** It will then only be necessary to register for 3 credit-hours of SW600 each semester.

### Change of Registration

The permanent record will show all courses for which the student has registered except those audited and those from which they had withdrawn before the drop/add period has expired.

Students who fail to attend the first class meeting without prior arrangement with the department may be dropped from the course to make space available to other students. When students drop a course, they have the responsibility to assure that they have actually been dropped; otherwise, they may receive a grade of "F" in the course.

There are two deadlines for change of registration (e.g., drop, withdrawal, audit status). The first deadline is about 14 days after classes begin each semester. Before this deadline, the student may drop without a "W," or change from credit to audit.). Course registration may not be changed from credit to audit after this deadline. If the student withdraws from a course or from the university after this deadline but before the second deadline, a grade of "W" will be recorded on the permanent record. The second deadline is approximately 35 calendar days after the first day of classes each semester. A student may change registration for a course at any time prior to and including this date by executing a change of registration form or, depending on the date, a late change of registration form and submitting it to the Graduate School. The signatures of both the instructor and Program Director are required.

After the second change of registration deadline, a student withdrawing from a course or from the university will receive a grade of "F" unless the student can demonstrate to the Graduate School that the request for withdrawal is based on circumstances beyond the student's control. In the latter case, a grade of "W" will be entered on the permanent record.

### Course Requirements

Course requirements for the PhD degree as specified in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Graduate Catalog must be satisfied. Also, the faculty may recommend or require one or more courses for a

student, based on their performance on the PhD comprehensive examination (see Comprehensive Examination section). All coursework must ultimately be approved by the PhD Program.

### **Independent Study**

Students wishing to pursue study or conduct research in an area of individual interest may seek a faculty member to provide an independent study course. **The PhD Program Director must approve the selection prior to registration for the course to count toward the PhD degree.** In addition, there are procedural requirements that must be fulfilled prior to registration:

1. A written proposal, developed by the student, must be prepared which describes course topic, learning objectives, credit-hours, readings, assignments, and method of evaluation and bibliography.
2. This proposal must be approved by the instructor and the PhD Program Director before registration.
3. A copy of the approved proposal and completed Independent Study Course Approval Form must be submitted to the PhD program office to be placed in the student's file.

## **CHANGES IN CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS**

This Handbook represents the offerings and requirements in effect at the time of publication, but there is no guarantee that they will not be changed or revoked. The course offerings and the requirements of the institution are continually under examination and revision. However, adequate and reasonable notice will be given to students affected by any changes.

## COURSEWORK SUMMARY BY SEMESTER

<b>Semester I</b>	Credit Hrs.
SWK 601: Research for Social Work Practice I	3
SWK 605: Analysis of Social Work Data I	3
SWK 626: Critical Thinking for Science and Research	3
SWK 628: Critical Review of Research Literature	3
<b>Semester II</b>	Credit Hrs.
SWK 602: Research for Social Work Practice II	3
SWK 606: Analysis of Social Work Data II	3
SWK 608: Qualitative Research Methods	3
SWK 630: Professional Development for Social Work Scholars I	1
<b>Semester III</b>	Credit Hrs.
SWK 603: Research III: Funded Research and Grant Writing	3
SWK 675: Teaching Methods in Social Work	3
Advanced Statistics Requirement*	3
SWK 677 or 678: Teaching Practicum I (face-to-face) or II (online)	1
<b>Semester IV</b>	Credit Hrs.
Advanced Elective (research methods, statistics, or substantive area)	3
Advanced Elective (research methods, statistics, or substantive area)	3
Advanced Elective (research methods, statistics, or substantive area)	3
SWK 680: Professional Development for Social Work Scholars II	1
SWK 677 or 678: Teaching Practicum I (face-to-face) or II (online)	1

<b>Semester V-VI</b>	Credit Hrs.
SW 600 (Dissertation Hours)	Varies by student**
<b>Semester VII-VIII</b>	Credit Hrs.
SW 600 (Dissertation Hours)	Varies by student**

\* A University of Tennessee, Knoxville, graduate statistics course outside of the College of Social Work.r.

\*\* Students are required to take a minimum of 24 hours of SW 600 to graduate.

## EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

There are several means by which students are evaluated. Before being admitted into the program, the student's academic record and letters of recommendation are evaluated by the PhD Program Committee and the Graduate School.

Continued evaluation of a student's academic progress is based on performance (1) in coursework, (2) in the Graduate Assistantship, (3) in practica, (4) on the comprehensive examination, and (5) during dissertation research. In addition, as stated in the current *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog*:

"Graduate education requires continuous evaluation of the student. This evaluation includes not only periodic objective evaluation, such as the cumulative grade-point average, performance on the comprehensive examinations and acceptance of the thesis or dissertation, but also judgments by the faculty of the student's progress and potential. Continuation in a program is determined by consideration of all these elements by the faculty and the head of the academic unit." (See "Academic Standards," in the current *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog*.)

The University policy on academic probations is, "Upon completion of 9 hours of graduate course work, a graduate student will be placed on academic probation when their cumulative GPA falls below 3.0. A student will be allowed to continue graduate study in subsequent semesters if each semester's grade point average is 3.0 or greater. Upon achieving a cumulative GPA of 3.0, the student will be removed from probationary status." (See "Academic Standards," in the current *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog*.)

The university policy on dismissal from the Graduate School, or from an academic program, is, "If a student is on academic probation, the degree or non-degree status will be terminated by the Dean of the Graduate School if the student's semester GPA falls below 3.0 in a subsequent semester. When the circumstances are deemed to justify continuation, and upon recommendation of the appropriate

academic unit and approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, a student on probation whose semester GPA is below 3.0 may be allowed to continue on a semester-by-semester basis. Dismissal of a graduate student by a department or program is accomplished by written notice to the student, with a copy to the Graduate School. In those cases where the department's requirements for continuation are more stringent than university requirements for graduate programs, the Dean of the Graduate School will evaluate the student's record to determine whether the student is eligible to apply for a change of status and register in another area of study." (See "Academic Standards," in the current *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog*.)

Every PhD student is expected to maintain a **minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0**, although it is hoped that all students will exceed the minimum requirement of the Graduate School. Individual grades below "B" in elective courses are tolerated as long as the student maintains a cumulative average of 3.0, but if the student receives many grades below "B" their GPA will suffer and their assistantship, if holding one, may be discontinued. Consistent with University policy, the College of Social Work has a more stringent policy for continuation in the PhD program subsequent to being placed on academic probation. **When a graduate student's GPA drops below a cumulative 3.0, they will have one semester in which to bring it back up to at least 3.0. Failure to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in that semester will result in termination from the program.**

**Any grade below a "B" in a required PhD course is likely to result in dismissal from the PhD program.**

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in their courses. There may also be special opportunities for students to experience special activities to enrich their learning, such as special seminars and colloquia done by college faculty and other prominent scholars that students **will be expected to attend and participate in.**

Every student should keep track of "I" (incomplete) grades received in any courses. Incompletes are to be given ONLY in cases of extraordinary circumstances and may not be used to enable a student to improve a grade in a course. A grade of "I" will not count in a student's grade-point average. However, as outlined in the *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog*, if the "I" is not removed within one calendar year it will automatically be converted to an "F" grade and counted in the student's grade-point average. **It is the student's responsibility to complete the incomplete in the one-year period.**

I: A temporary grade indicating that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course but, due to unforeseen and extraordinary circumstances, has been unable to finish all requirements.

An "I" is NOT given to enable a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade. All incompletes must be removed within one calendar year. If a supplementary grade report has not been received in the Office of Graduate Admissions and Records at the end of one-year period, the "I" will be changed to an F. The course will not be counted in the cumulative grade average until a final grade is assigned. No student may graduate with an "I" on the record.

**S/NC** (carries credit-hours, but no quality points),

“S” is equivalent to a grade of “B” or better, and “NC” means no credit earned. Courses where “NC” is received may be repeated for a grade of “S”. A grade of “S” or “NC” is allowed only where indicated in the course description in the *University of Tennessee,*

*Knoxville Graduate Catalog.* The number of “S” or “NC” courses in a student’s program is limited to one-fourth of the total credit-hours required.

**P/NP** (carries credit-hours, but no quality points),

“P” indicates progress toward completion of a thesis or dissertation.

“NP” indicates no progress or inadequate progress.

**W** (carries no credit-hours or quality points), indicates that the student officially withdrew from the course.

No graduate student may repeat a course for the purpose of raising a grade already received, with the exception of “NC”. A graduate student may not do additional work nor repeat an examination to raise a final grade. (See the current *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog.*)

## **GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS**

A Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) in the College is typically a 25% appointment, meaning that a student with a GRA is expected to work approximately 10 hours per week on faculty research with a designated faculty mentor. GRA assignments are made by the Associate Dean for Research (ADR) in consultation with the PhD Program Director. Students with a 25% GRA appointment must be enrolled as full-time students in the PhD program (9 credit hours in each of the Fall and Spring semesters).

If a student is not meeting expectations of the GRA, the faculty member is expected to provide this feedback to the student and to inform the PhD Program Director. **If after receiving performance feedback and guidelines for improvement, the student continues to not meet expectations, the student’s GRA appointment and continuation in the program may be at risk.**

Faculty members with a GRA assigned to them are expected to provide the GRA with meaningful research and scholarly development opportunities. In situations when the PhD Program determines that the student is not receiving adequate opportunities for research and scholarship for the GRA appointment, the student will be assigned to a new faculty member at the ADR and PhD Program’s discretion.

Regular feedback and professional development discussions between the student and faculty member throughout the GRA period are encouraged. In addition, toward the end of each Fall and Spring semester of a GRA, the faculty member and student will, respectively, complete the Semi-Annual Evaluation and Semi-Annual Reflections Forms, meet to discuss and optionally add comments to these forms, and then sign each form. The student is responsible for submitting these forms to the PhD Program by the deadlines on each form.

For a student's fourth year in the program, it may be possible, depending on availability and College and program needs, to convert a Graduate Research Assistantship to a Graduate Teaching Associate assistantship instead, for which the student would independently teach one BSSW or MSSW course in each of the Fall and Spring semesters.

Students are encouraged to practice communicating directly with GRA supervisors to arrange things like work duties, expected duties and work hours, and time off. Students should make use of their GRA experience in a way that allows them to meet the program's guidelines for publications (three expected by year four) and presentations (three expected by year four). Students should address any concerns directly with their GRA supervisors in a timely manner. Students should reach out to the program director for assistance with problems that cannot be resolved through direct communication with the GRA supervisor. Students are expected to stay with the GRA match for the entirety of the academic year unless unusual circumstances arise.

## TEACHING PRACTICA

Concurrent with, or after completing, SWK 675, students will complete at least two "Teaching Practicums" (1 credit hour each). For each practicum, the student will work as a TA for one semester under the supervision of a full-time College of Social Work faculty member, for a 2-, 3-, or 4-credit course offered by the College of Social Work. It is preferred that one practicum be for a traditional, face-to-face course and one practicum for a distance education, virtual course. Students should complete the Teaching Practicum Planning Form and submit this to the PhD Program within the first 10 days of the semester in which the practicum is planned. Note: During Covid, it is expected that students may prefer that both practica are completed virtually.

**Note:** SWK 675, 677, and 678 must be taken and successfully completed before a student may independently teach classes in either the BSSW or MSSW programs. As noted above, students must work with a full-time College of Social Work faculty member to complete both practica. Students should consult the faculty bio pages to learn more about faculty expertise and reach out to meet faculty and ask them to serve as teaching mentors. It is the responsibility of the student to secure two mentors for these practica, and students are expected to work with a different mentor each time.

## SCHOLARLY PROGRESS

The PhD Program may request periodic GRA, practicum, or other scholarly progress updates from a student, or from a faculty member working with the student, to ensure that students are engaging in appropriate and meaningful research and scholarly activities and that they are making adequate progress towards their scholarly goals.

### Publication and Conference Abstract Goals

**Before the start of the second year**, students should aim to have authored or co-authored at least one research article submitted to a scholarly journal and/or one abstract submitted for presentation at a major social work conference. These are typically pursued in collaboration with the GRA or another faculty member.

**Before the start of year three**, students should aim to have authored or co-authored at least one to two research articles submitted to scholarly journals and two abstracts submitted for presentation at a major social work conference, or another major scholarly conference related to the student's area of scholarship.

**Before the start of year four**, students should aim to have authored or co-authored at least three research articles submitted to scholarly journals and three abstracts submitted for major social work conference presentations. Ideally, one article should be the systematic review related to the student's substantive area or dissertation topic, if already approved by the student's dissertation committee during the comprehensive examination process.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Purpose

As stated in the current *University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate Catalog*, successful completion of the comprehensive examination:

“indicates that, in the judgment of the faculty, the doctoral student can think analytically and creatively, has a comprehensive knowledge of the field and the specialty, knows how to use academic resources, and is deemed capable of completing the dissertation. The comprehensive examination must be passed prior to admission to candidacy”.

**The comprehensive examination consists of three components—a scholarly paper, the dissertation proposal, and a professional presentation.** The paper and proposal must be approved by the student's PhD committee. The presentation is a defense of these two documents. The content, organization, and length of the presentation should be consistent with professional presentations made at major social work conferences. The comprehensive examination typically occurs at the start of the third year and after the student has completed the required coursework and practicums.

## Scholarly Paper

The scholarly paper should be a publishable systematic review related to the student's dissertation topic. This paper will also be the first paper of the student's three-paper dissertation. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate the student's thorough knowledge of the relevant literature, the ability to methodologically critique research studies, the ability to synthesize and integrate key concepts and topics, and the ability to identify specific gaps or neglected areas in the research literature. The paper should conform to the current issue of the APA-style manual.

The systematic review should relate logically to the statement of the problem, hypotheses, definition and operationalization of variables, methodology and data analysis that will be conducted for the dissertation study. It should summarize the results of previous studies that have reported relationships, or the lack thereof, among the variables included in the proposed research.

An important function of the review is to provide a sound methodological critique of the studies in the systematic review. An equally important function is to provide a theoretical explanation of the relationships among the variables of interest, and the absence of relationships with other important variables. It is essential that the review explain what mechanisms link the variables. The review can also provide descriptive information about similar programs or target populations. The review should cover material directly related to the problem being studied as well as relevant theories that relate to these problem areas.

In agreement with the student's PhD committee chair, the paper should be distributed to members of the comprehensive examination committee for review and feedback. All comments and feedback from committee members should be directed to the student, who then is responsible for discussing the feedback with the chair. If committee members disagree about content or revisions to the paper, the committee chair has final approval.

## Dissertation Proposal

The purpose of the dissertation proposal is to demonstrate that the student has completed the conceptual work, and has the methodological knowledge and skills, necessary to begin work on the dissertation. The proposal includes a statement of the research problem or question, including hypotheses if appropriate, an explication of the proposed methodology, a discussion of the proposed data analysis, and a realistic timetable.

### A. Statement of the Problem

The problem statement is the guiding theme of the proposal. This section should include a statement of the **purpose** of the study and should specify its **objectives**.

#### a. Purpose of the Study

This section explains why the research is being conducted. It should establish the importance of the problem and explain why the research is needed. For example, it could document the seriousness of juvenile antisocial behavior nationally and describe the gaps that exist in the knowledge about this

behavior. It might also explain why the specific knowledge gap chosen is of particular importance. It could also include a statement of methodological problems in previous research that will be addressed in the proposed dissertation research.

#### b. Objectives

This section describes what the student hopes to accomplish with the research. This includes answering specific research questions about relationships among variables of interest. After reading this section, the reader should be clear about the questions to be asked, the kinds of answers expected, and the information expected to be provided by the results of the proposed research. For example, one might propose to test a drug abuse treatment approach to determine the intervention characteristics that contribute differentially to the success of women and men who participate in the program. Related outcomes could also include the provision of descriptive information not currently available. An example might be a comparison of arrest rates for participants in the years prior to and following participation in the program.

Students interested in doing research which is not oriented toward theory verification or intervention testing (e.g. grounded-theory, historical research) will have research objectives that differ somewhat in format, but the principle is essentially the same. One might, for example, wish to study the ways professional caregivers such as social workers, physicians and nurses in high stress medical settings conceptualize their work to keep themselves from "burn-out." The objective might be to discover how different cognitive coping styles develop and work.

#### c. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework(s)

The major theory(ies) and conceptual frameworks informing or guiding the dissertation should be described and discussed. A diagram of the conceptual framework to be tested, if applicable, may also be included.

### **B. Methodology**

#### a. Subjects

Subjects can be individuals, families, groups, organizations, states, or countries, depending on the unit of analysis. This section will describe how the subjects to be included in the study will be chosen. For example, will every subject who volunteers be included? If not, what criteria will be used to choose those to be included? Will there be a comparison group? How will the subjects in that group be chosen? In addition to describing how subjects will be chosen, this section should provide a rationale for the selection approach taken. This rationale usually includes external validity requirements (i.e., the conditions necessary to generalize the findings to a particular target population). After reading this section, the reader should have a clear understanding of how subjects will be selected for the proposed research and of why they will be selected in that particular manner. The reader should also have a clear idea of the characteristics of the intended subjects, including age, sex, ethnicity, education, SES, and other related variables.

#### b. Design

This section will describe the type of research design to be used. For example, it may be an ideographic, survey, quasi-experimental, or experimental design. It may be cross-sectional or longitudinal. It may be a retrospective or a prospective design. The design should also describe the sequence of events that will occur in conducting the research. This would include how the subjects will be divided up, what the subjects are expected to experience during the research, and when and how often they will be observed or asked for information. After reading this section, the reader should have a clear understanding of the overall design of the study.

#### c. Data Collection

This section will operationalize the variables to be included in the proposed study. In many proposals, it is helpful to divide the variables into dependent or criterion variables, independent or predictor variables, and covariates. A description of how each variable will be operationalized and measured should be included in this section. Ideally, one should plan estimates of measurement reliability and validity. After reading this section, the reader will know the specific variables that will be included in the proposed study and, most important, how they will be measured.

#### d. Data Analysis

This section will explain how the data will be analyzed once they are collected.

In most cases, more than one analysis will be conducted. Each analysis that will be used to meet each objective listed above should be described. Also a description of the specific effects to be examined in each analysis, such as main effects, interaction effects, or simple main effects, should be included.

The unit of analysis to be used should be specified and the reason for choosing that unit should be explained. After reading this section, the reader should know on which effects the dissertation will concentrate and in exactly what way the data are to be analyzed to meet each objective of the proposed evaluation.

### **C. Reference List**

The reference list should include full reference documentation for all articles and texts mentioned in the proposal. It is important that the student fully review relevant previous work in developing the proposal.

### **D. Timetable**

This section will describe the sequence of activities necessary to conduct the research. It will include the time necessary to complete each activity. After reading this section, the reader will have a clear understanding of what steps will be taken, the order in which they will occur, and the time each step will require.

## Student PhD Committee Composition and Procedures

The University of Tennessee Graduate School has established the following rules for PhD committee membership:

- The committee must have at least 4 members.
- At least 2 committee members must be UT tenured or tenure-track faculty members.
- At least 1 committee member must be from outside of the student's department/interdisciplinary program. This external member can be from outside UT.
- UT tenured or tenure-track faculty without a doctoral degree and other experts in the field may serve on PhD committees with department head (PhD program director) approval. Emeritus faculty can serve on committees on which they are serving in that capacity at the time of retirement.

The following are requirements for committee chairs:

- Committee chairs must hold a doctoral degree.
- UT tenured, tenure-track, and joint faculty holding a doctoral degree may chair PhD committees.
- The chair is typically from the student's department/interdisciplinary program, but department heads (PhD program director) can make exceptions.
- UT employees holding a non-tenure track assistant professor, associate professor, or professor title may co-chair committees if their appointment is within the student's major. (The other co-chair must be a UT tenured, tenure-track or joint faculty member.)
- Emeritus faculty can chair committees on which they are serving in that capacity at the time of retirement.

All tenured and tenure-track College of Social Work faculty are approved by the University and the College of Social Work to chair the committee. If a student would like a tenure-track Assistant Professor to chair the committee, they should first discuss this with the PhD Program Director. It is recommended that an Assistant Professor serve as a member or co-chair on a PhD committee prior to serving as a chair.

All members of the student's committees, including the chair, must be approved by the PhD Program Director. The student should work with the doctoral programs assistant to complete the Graduate School's PhD Committee Form for the director's review and approval. The doctoral programs assistant will then submit the form to the Graduate School on behalf of the student.

The student is responsible for distributing all documents and materials to the committee prior to the comprehensive examination date. The examination presentations cannot be scheduled until the committee has reviewed and provided feedback on the systematic review paper and dissertation proposal.

Upon satisfactory completion of all three components of the comprehensive examination, the student is responsible for working with the doctoral programs assistant to obtain signatures on the College's

Comprehensive Examination Completion Form indicating pass/fail. This form must then be submitted to the PhD program for inclusion in the student's file. Providing all other requirements have been met, the student may then work with the doctoral programs assistant to complete the paperwork necessary to request admission to candidacy from the Graduate School.

Any changes in the student's PhD committee must be submitted to the PhD Program and then the Graduate School for approval using the appropriate form.

All members of the committee must be present at the final dissertation defense. The defense can be completed in person, or via a virtual conference platform, as agreed upon by the student and their committee.

## DISSERTATION

### Overview of Procedural Requirements

The relevant [Graduate School](#) requirements and deadlines are nonnegotiable. The Graduate School seldom makes exceptions to these [steps](#). There are [deadlines](#) for **scheduling** a dissertation defense as well as for actually **defending** the dissertation. These dates are posted to the Graduate School's website each semester. The College of Social Work PhD program operates within these guidelines.

1. The student's PhD committee must be formed and approved (see above).
2. A Dissertation Proposal Approval Form must be completed, including signatures of committee members, and submitted to the PhD Program Director for a signature and for the student's file. **At this point or sometime in the very near future, the student should contact the Thesis/Dissertation Consultant.)**
3. The dissertation itself is completed under the guidance of the committee.
4. The college and university require **IRB approval** of dissertation research **prior to any data collection.**
5. When the committee has determined that the dissertation is complete, the student should consult with their committee members and the PhD program staff to schedule the oral defense and to reserve a room for the defense. The student should assure that the scheduled time is within the deadline set by the Graduate School. Students should collaborate with the doctoral programs assistant to complete the Schedule of Defense form, which should then be submitted to the Graduate School and a copy then placed in the student's file.

5. The Graduate School will forward a Final Examination Pass/Fail form to the student's committee chair to be signed and returned to the Graduate School after the oral defense.
6. The dissertation will then be defended. Once the dissertation has been successfully defended and final corrections have been made, the four original pass/fail forms for the written dissertation must be submitted with the dissertation itself to the Thesis/Dissertation Consultant who must also approve the dissertation on behalf of the Graduate School after it has been approved by the committee and successfully defended by the student. These forms may be signed at the time of the oral defense if the committee has no further recommendations. The instructions for preparation of the final document, both its content and its format, are very specific. The student should familiarize him/herself with these instructions before beginning work on their dissertation (see below).

### Admission to Candidacy

Request for admission to candidacy must be submitted by each student working on a graduate degree. The request for admission to candidacy occurs after the comprehensive examination has been passed.

1. The [form](#) should be completed by the student, with assistance from the doctoral programs assistant. **The student should be sure to obtain a current copy of their transcript to aid in listing coursework.** Coursework listed should include 6 credits that were done for the Master's degree (even if at another institution) and must include all that the student has completed or expects to complete for the PhD degree.
2. The Admission to Candidacy Application form **must be submitted to the PhD program for verification of coursework before** it is submitted to the Graduate School.
3. The student, all committee members, and PhD Program Director must sign the form. The signatures of the committee members and the director indicate their approval and acceptance of all of the information that is on the form including coursework offered for the degree. **Any changes in this information must be submitted to the Graduate School.**
4. The student must be admitted to candidacy one full semester prior to Commencement.

### Dissertation and Oral Defense

- a) The dissertation should be comprised of three scholarly papers plus introduction and concluding chapters that are focused on a single theme or substantive area of research. Each of the three papers should make a distinct contribution to the knowledge base on the

substantive area and be of appropriate quality to be published in a scholarly journal. One paper should be a systematic review of existing research on the substantive topic while the other two papers should be based on data analyzed by the student as part of the dissertation process.

- b) The introduction chapter should present the overall theme or focus of the dissertation and describe how the three scholarly papers fit together. It also should identify the key research questions being addressed in the papers and the methodology used to answer these questions. The concluding chapter should summarize and synthesize the three scholarly papers. This includes identifying key findings from the papers, themes or patterns from the three papers, limitations, and recommendations derived from the research.
- c) All three scholarly papers should represent work undertaken while the student is enrolled in the PhD program and must represent the intellectual work of the student. The student is expected to be responsible for the paper's development, the research design and data analysis used in the paper, interpreting the results, and writing the paper.
- d) For the systematic review paper, the student may wish to include a second reviewer for determining if studies meet inclusion/exclusion criteria, in accordance with systematic review standards. In such cases, any potential co-authorship of the second reviewer for a subsequent journal publication should be discussed prior to the review work beginning and should follow guidelines for ethical standards of authorship, such as those provided by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.
- e) All papers must be suitable to be published in a refereed journal prior to the dissertation defense with the student as sole or first author.
- f) If a student pursues publication of any of the three papers prior to submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School, it is the student's responsibility to review and adhere to Graduate School policies on such publication, including the most current version of the Graduate School's Guide to the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations.

After the dissertation committee approves all sections of the dissertation and the three scholarly papers have been determined to be appropriate for publication in refereed journals, the student may schedule their dissertation defense. The defense is a formal meeting between the student and dissertation committee. The student is responsible for giving an oral presentation of their full dissertation. The student is expected to clearly and professionally articulate the rationale and purpose of the dissertation. The student also should describe the methodology and interpret the results, identify limitations, and discuss recommendations from the research. The student should identify areas for future research and articulate a personal research agenda that builds upon the dissertation. The student should also articulate feedback they may have received from journal editorial reviews and

describe in detail how they have responded to this feedback. The dissertation committee is responsible for challenging the student to defend their choices and conclusions, assessing the student's knowledge about the topic, and confirming that the student is well-positioned to meet the stated research goals.

Students should inform the doctoral programs assistant when the defense is scheduled. The defense can take place in-person, or using a virtual conference platform, and it is open to the public. All visitors and members of the dissertation committee will be present for the oral presentation. Visitors then will have the opportunity to ask questions and participate in a discussion about the student's presentation and dissertation topic. After this, visitors will be asked to leave so the dissertation committee may question the student. The student will then be dismissed from the room so the committee may convene a confidential discussion and vote concerning the outcome of the dissertation defense. The student will be notified about the results of the voting as soon as the committee completes its deliberation.

## Formatting Notes

To ensure acceptance by the Graduate School, the dissertation **must** be prepared in exact conformity with the [University of Tennessee, Knoxville Guide to the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations](#).

Contact the university thesis and dissertation consultant at:

111 Student Services Bldg  
Knoxville, TN 37996-0211  
Phone: (865) 974-1337  
Email (preferred): [thesis@utk.edu](mailto:thesis@utk.edu)

The student should contact the consultant early in the dissertation writing process to make sure that they are writing in the dissertation in the appropriate format. The student should also work closely with the consultant to prepare the final version of the dissertation after a successful defense.

The university only accepts electronic versions of the dissertation.

All theses and dissertations accepted by the university as partial fulfillment of master's and PhD degrees must conform to certain formatting standards. Therefore, it is required that all graduating theses and PhD students be in contact with the Graduate School's thesis/dissertation consultant to discuss how formatting guidelines apply to their document.

At the end of the review and approval process, students will upload the final, official copy of their **ETDs (electronic theses and dissertations)** to the Graduate School's collection in Trace, the university's electronic repository. The Graduate School will post students' ETDs to the internet after graduation.

**Students should closely review and follow all guidance on the Graduate School website for dissertation and graduation steps and deadlines, including but not limited to:**

**Theses & Dissertations**

<https://gradschool.utk.edu/thesedissertations/>

**Getting Approval**

<https://gradschool.utk.edu/thesedissertations/getting-approval/>

**Submission**

<https://gradschool.utk.edu/thesedissertations/submission/>

**Steps to Graduation**

<https://gradschool.utk.edu/graduation/steps-to-graduation/>

**Graduation Deadlines** <https://gradschool.utk.edu/graduation/graduation-deadlines/>

## APPENDIX A: UT COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(Revised 3-11-14)

CSW students are responsible for adhering to the University of Tennessee's Standards of Conduct, which are published in [Hilltopics](#), the University's student handbook. The Standards of Conduct include a prohibition on cheating, plagiarism, or any other act of academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, an act in violation of the Honor Statement. A copy of the Honor Statement and a more detailed description of the procedures that are followed in cases of alleged academic dishonesty also can be found in [Hilltopics](#).

The Office of Student Judicial Affairs is responsible for determining whether to initiate a disciplinary charge against a student for violating the Standards of Conduct. Potential penalties imposed through the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for violations of the Standards of Conduct include suspension and permanent dismissal from the University. In addition, the CSW may take independent action regarding the student's status in the CSW if the student's conduct violates the CSW's standards of professional conduct, as described below.

### CSW STANDARDS of PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Separate and distinct from the University of Tennessee's Standards of Conduct, and the CSW's standards for academic performance (which are contained elsewhere in this handbook and in the Graduate Catalog), there are certain cognitive, emotional and character requirements that students must possess that provide the CSW with reasonable assurance that students can complete the entire course of study and participate fully in all aspects of social work education and the professional practice of social work. Students in the CSW are expected to possess the following abilities and attributes at a level appropriate to their year in the program. They are expected to meet these standards in the classroom and in their practica. Attention to these standards will be part of evaluations made by faculty responsible for evaluating applications for admission and faculty responsible for evaluating students' classroom and practicum performance.

- **Professional Behavior.** The social work student behaves professionally by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, adhering to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and the Tennessee Board of Social Worker Standards of Conduct (1365-01-.10) as found in the Tennessee Board of Social Work Certification and Licensure General Rules and Regulations, <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules/1365/1365-01.20191027.pdf>
- **Interpersonal Skills.** The social work student communicates and interacts with other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals in a professional manner, and demonstrates respect for and consideration of other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals in spoken, written and electronic form. The social work student expresses

her/his ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and ability to listen to others.

- **Self-awareness.** The social work student is willing to examine and change his/her behavior when it interferes with her/his working with clients and other professionals, and is able to work effectively with others in subordinate positions as well as with those in authority.
- **Professional Commitment.** The social work student has a strong commitment to the essential values of social work (the dignity and worth of every individual and her/his right to a just share of the society's resources). The social work student is knowledgeable about and adheres to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and the Rules of the Tennessee Board of Social Worker Certification.
- **Self-care.** The social work student recognizes the signs of stress, develops appropriate means of self-care, and seeks supportive resources if necessary.
- **Valuing Diversity.** The social work student appreciates the value of human diversity. Social work students do not impose their own personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on other students, faculty, staff, clients or professionals. Social work students are willing to serve in an appropriate manner all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious affiliation (or lack of), gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or value system.

The following list provides examples, but is not exhaustive, of professional misconduct:

- Misuse, alteration or falsification of documents
- Unauthorized or improper use of University equipment, services and facilities
- Harassing, coercing and intimidating behavior
- Obstruction or disruption of teaching
- Criminal activity
- Failure to comply with an order from a legitimate university authority and failure to attend required meetings called by university faculty or administration such as Academic Committee Meetings and Field Evaluation Meetings
- Threatening behavior and verbal abuse
- Inappropriate relationships
- Inability to secure, sustain, or perform satisfactorily in a field placement
- Other behaviors determined to be unprofessional conduct towards colleagues, faculty, staff and/or clients

## **CSW Professional Standards Committee**

Except for alleged academic dishonesty, which shall be addressed through the procedures set forth in [Hilltopics](#), the following procedures are used to address a faculty member's concern that a social work student has failed to meet or maintain the CSW's professional standards:

1. The faculty member/major professor should discuss the concern(s) with the student and seek agreement with the student on the question of the student's failure to meet or maintain professional standards. If a plan of remediation is recommended by the faculty member and agreed upon by the student, the faculty member should document the plan of remediation. The documentation should include a description of the student's conduct, the plan of remediation, and an indication that the student has agreed to the plan of remediation. Copies should be provided to the student, the student's record the student's major professor, and Program Director.
2. If the faculty member believes dismissal from the CSW is appropriate, or the faculty member believes that the student should be given an opportunity to remedy his/her failure to meet or maintain a standard but the faculty member and the student cannot agree on a plan for remediation, the faculty member shall notify the student's Program Director. The Program Director shall call a meeting with the faculty and student involved in an attempt to resolve the matter. If the matter cannot be resolved, the Program Director, WITH NOTIFICATION OF the Associate Dean, shall convene a hearing of the Professional Standards Committee as soon as practicable.
3. A Professional Standards Committee will be constituted each year. The Associate Dean will select a faculty chairperson and 3 faculty members from the full-time faculty to serve on this Committee. The term of office is one year and can be renewed. The Professional Standards Committee meets on an as needed basis. Faculty members of the Professional Standards Committee having direct prior involvement with a case shall recuse themselves. In such a circumstance, the Associate Dean will appoint an alternative faculty for consideration of that case.
4. The student shall be provided with written notice (e-mail is sufficient) of the time and place of the hearing of the Committee at least 48 hours in advance of the hearing.
5. The faculty member's prior written documentation of the student's conduct and proposed plan for remediation will be submitted along with any other germane supporting documents. Prior to the hearing, the student may also submit written materials to the Committee. Copies of materials submitted to the Committee must be provided to the opposing party.

6. At the hearing, the Committee will hear orderly presentations from the student and the faculty member(s) who raised the concern(s). Each party will be allowed to present witnesses in support of her/his position, ask questions to opposing witnesses, and rebut the presentation of the opposing party. However, a hearing of the Committee is not a legal proceeding and legal representation of the parties is not permitted in the hearing.
7. The Committee will deliberate in private and make a decision on the appropriate course of action, which may include, but is not limited to: no action against a student; placement of a student on probationary status; changing the student's field placement; putting the student on a leave of absence; or dismissing the student from the CSW.

A student may appeal the decision of the Committee by sending a written appeal to the Associate Dean within 14 days, who then shall make a decision on the student's appeal and communicate that decision to the student in writing. A student may appeal a decision of the Associate Dean to the Dean of the CSW by sending a written appeal to the Dean within 14 days of receiving the appeal of the Associate Dean, who then shall make a decision on the student's appeal and communicate that decision to the student in writing. To appeal the decision of the Dean of the College of Social Work, a student shall file a written appeal in accordance with the Graduate Council Appeal Procedure. The Graduate Council considers student appeals only after they have been duly processed through the College of Social Work. A complete statement of the Graduate Council Appeal Procedure is available from the UT-Knoxville Graduate School, <http://gradschool.utk.edu>.

## APPENDIX B: TRAVEL PROCEDURES

### Funding Amount

The College of Social Work has budgeted \$1,500 in travel funds per academic year for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year students to use for traveling to conferences at which they are presenting. Students in their 1<sup>st</sup> year will have \$250 in travel funds to attend conferences, whether they are presenting or not.

**Note:** The support that is described above may vary from year to year depending on budget changes at the College and University, so please check with the program at the beginning of the academic year to confirm these amounts. Due to COVID-19, availability of travel funds for students will depend on budgetary decisions of the College and University. Please check with the PhD Program Director on fund availability.

### Procedural Steps

#### Step 1. Submit a travel request at least 1 month before your travel.

Before any travel on university business, please contact the PhD Program Assistant so that they can submit a travel request on your behalf. This is for your protection. Even if you are not receiving any funding, we still need to know you are traveling for liability purposes; however, note that failure to notify us of a trip ahead of time could result in an inability to reimburse you for your trip.

Here is the information that we need to have on record *before* you travel:

1. Where are you going?
2. When are you going? Departure and arrival dates.
3. Why are you going? Are you presenting a paper? Facilitating a roundtable?
4. Do you have any funding? GSS Travel Awards, faculty grants, student grants, etc.

#### Step 2. Submit itemized receipts to the PhD Program Assistant as soon as you return.

Return from your trip with **itemized receipts** (e.g., hotel, airfare, taxi, parking, etc.) The more documentation you can provide, the better.

**Be careful with travel packages.** If you go this route, you will still need to provide itemized receipts of all the expenses included in the package, which can be really hard to do with travel packages. Ex: If you stay at a hotel Friday-Sunday nights, the travel package might provide you with an average nightly rate. We need the *actual* cost of your hotel per night, with an itemized list of taxes, fees, etc.

**Comparison quotes for airfare.** If you're not flying out of Knoxville, obtain a quote for the same trip on the same travel dates but departing from Knoxville for comparison purposes. Submit this comparison quote with your flight receipt so that UT will see that you are being reimbursed for the cheaper option.

**Uber.** If you take an Uber or other rideshare, please submit your destination and reason for the trip with your receipts. Ex: airport to hotel; hotel to dinner, etc.

**UTK Travel Policy.** Review the travel policy in advance at: <https://policy.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads//policytech/system-wide/fi/FI0705-Travel.pdf>

### Other Travel Notes

- Students can often volunteer at conferences in exchange for a reduced or complimentary registration.
- Upon registering for CSWE, students will receive an email requesting verification of their student status. Please forward the email to the PhD Program Assistant who will prepare a letter for the PhD Program Director to review and sign. The Program Assistant will then send the letter to CSWE on your behalf.
- Graduate Student Senate (GSS) Travel Awards can also help offset travel expenses. This award is administered by the Dean of the Graduate School in coordination by the Graduate Student Senate. Allocations from this fund provide travel awards for University of Tennessee graduate students attending professional meetings to present original research. The awards, distributed three times a year, are made on the basis of both need and merit, and allow for partial reimbursement of transportation, lodging, and conference expenses.
- Further information on the GSS Travel Awards is available on the GSS website here: <https://gss.utk.edu/travel-awards/information/>
- CONUS Rates: Note that UTK will compensate you for meals and incidentals and lodging per the CONUS rates of the ZIP code in which you are staying. Example: If the CONUS rate for lodging is \$150, your hotel is reimbursable up to \$150. If you spend any more than that, you will not be reimbursed for the difference. The same applies for your per diem for meals and incidentals. The website to input your travel ZIP code to find the per diem rates is available here: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

## APPENDIX C: FORMS

Completion of required forms at each step of the student's progress through the PhD program is the student's responsibility. There are two central websites for forms:

1. The Graduate School's Forms Central website is available at <https://gradschool.utk.edu/forms-central/>.
2. College of Social Work forms are available at <http://www.csw.utk.edu/phd/resources.htm>.