



MSSW Personal Statement Summer & Fall 2025

As part of your application to the MSSW program, you are required to answer the following personal statement questions within the application in Slate.

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. Applicants must not seek the assistance of Generative AI Tools like ChatGPT. Use of a Generative AI Tool to complete an admission application constitutes academic dishonesty. There is a 500 word limit for each question.

1. Your Goals

- a. Your Professional Goals: Describe your career goal(s) and how you plan to utilize your master's in social work post-graduation. What skills, knowledge, and experience you hope to obtain through completion of the MSSW program to reach your goals?
- 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. Provide an example of an experience that illustrates your capacity to engage in self-reflection, supervision, and self-regulation. Describe how you would use these processes to grow your social work skills and demonstrate professionalism in the classroom and field settings.

2. UT MSSW Mission, Vision, and Values

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? What part(s) of the mission stand out to you? Are there any areas of the [UTCSW](#) mission, vision and values, that do not align with your own values and perspectives?

3. NASW Code of Ethics & Personal Values

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

Describe what you consider to be a major social problem. In your response incorporate at least two references that support your conclusions. APA, which is the style used in the social profession, is preferred for source citations. You may use a separate page for your citations and upload it to your application.

Address the following three areas:

- a. The scope of the social concern including relevant statistics and key societal and other factors that contribute to the problem.
- b. Your recommendations to solve the problem. Consider and describe how the problem could be addressed at different levels such as individual, organizational, and community.
- c. Challenges and questions which might arise in seeking to solve the problem.

5. Field Practice

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. Additional Information

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?

7. Applicants to the Online MSSW Program

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.

The College of Social Work and the University of Tennessee welcome and honor all people. The College of Social Work is committed to Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in alignment with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) which upholds and reinforces the enduring commitment of social work education to principles of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. As specified by the CSWE 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, caste, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. This intersectionality means that a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power (CSWE 2022 EPAS).

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