

 SOCIAL WORK

2025-2026

PhD Student Handbook



Revised August 2025

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WELCOME FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Congratulations on your acceptance – and welcome to the **PhD Program** at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work!

Pursuing a PhD is a transformative experience, both personally and professionally. You will be challenged to extend beyond your comfort zone as you identify and refine your research interests, engage critically with theory and research evidence, and develop your own research agenda.

During the program, you will gain deeper insight into the current body of evidence and learn to contribute to the development of new knowledge. I believe you will find the journey both demanding and deeply rewarding. I encourage you to stay curious and lean into the challenges, which often accompany meaningful learning and growth. You are joining a vibrant and supportive community of scholars who are committed to helping you become a rigorous scholar who will apply research to strengthen the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

As your PhD Program Director, I am here to support you throughout your time in the program. Along with the College of Social Work faculty and staff, I will be an ongoing resource. Please reach out anytime: mheld@utk.edu. You can also contact our Program Assistant, Katie Banks: kbanks3@utk.edu.

Welcome again... and **GO VOLS!**

Sincerely,

Mary Lehman Held, PhD, LCSW
Associate Professor; Interim PhD Program Director

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) and two research centers. The MSSW is also obtainable at the Nashville campus of the UTK College of Social Work and online.

Click here for more information on the [History of the College of Social Work](#).

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

College Mission

Pursuing a more socially just society through education, scholarship, and engagement.

To do this, we...

- conducting groundbreaking, interdisciplinary research that informs policy and practice.
- building partnerships that leverage our resources to improve lives in Tennessee and beyond.
- equipping professional social workers with the knowledge and skills to facilitate well-being.

College Vision

Communities where all people can thrive.

College Values

Innovation: Committing to a spirit of continual learning and creativity in education, scholarship, engagement, and administration.

Respect: Recognizing and honoring the dignity, value, and well-being of each person, in all of their identities and interests.

Empathy: Informing action with curiosity and understanding.

Access: Promoting an atmosphere where all members of the college community feel welcome, can thrive, and achieve success.

Collaboration: Building authentic, mutually beneficial relationships that empower shared success.

Integrity: Exemplifying transparency, accuracy, and the highest standards of professional ethics.

Accountability: Holding ourselves and one other responsible for living into our shared values.

Principles of Civility & Community

[See Hilltopics statement.](#)

INTRODUCTION FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

This manual provides information about the PhD program in Social Work. While every effort has been made to be comprehensive, the manual is neither exhaustive nor is the accuracy of information in this handbook guaranteed, since policies can change between revisions of this handbook.

The definitive guiding document for graduate students is *Hilltopics*, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) Graduate Catalog. In addition to regularly reviewing the College's PhD handbook, please review the University level graduate catalog regularly. All students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures that regulate the process of their degree obtainment here at the University of Tennessee.

Students are expected to verify information regarding College and University policy with the current version of handbook and the current graduate catalog. If information is unavailable or lacks clarity, the student should ask the PhD program director, the program assistant, their advisor, and/or their dissertation committee chair.

Many rules and regulations govern a student's progress through the PhD program and are set by the Graduate School. If you have a circumstance requiring special consideration, please contact the PhD program director.

GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Graduate School has policies and procedures that govern the obtainment of the PhD degree in social work. An overview of those policies and procedures can be found on the Graduate School's [Big Picture](#) section of their webpage.

The Graduate School also has information specific to [international students](#) on their webpage.

Admission Requirements

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

1. Admission by the [Office of Graduate Admissions](#)
2. Admission by the [College of Social Work](#)

Additional information about UTK graduate admissions can be found on the Graduate School's [admissions page](#) on their website.

Admitted students are expected to enter the program in the fall of the year they are admitted. Students who wish to defer their admission must reapply and be readmitted to the program.

THE PHD PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK: OVERVIEW

The purpose of social work education at the PhD level is for students to develop an understanding and appreciation of the scientific method so that graduates can extend the knowledge base of social work practice, policy, advocacy and/or education through the development and dissemination of empirical research.

Graduates of PhD programs in social work are generally prepared to assume roles in social work research, education, and/or leadership.

PhD students at UTK can obtain a minor in statistics through the Intercollegiate Graduate Statistics Program (IGSP) [Intercollegiate Graduate Statistics Data Science Minor](#).

Other graduate certificates and minors are also available and listed [here](#).

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).
- Understand how to advance a scientific research agenda through scientific collaborations and obtainment of research funding.
- Understand how to transmit knowledge, skills, and values to social work students so they can be competent social workers.

PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE WITHIN THE COLLEGE

Getting started as a new PhD student. Expectations for new students: All students are expected to establish a professional presence within the College of Social Work (CSW) upon arrival. To begin this process, students will be expected to have a professional head shot photo taken at orientation. This photo will be used to feature each student on the [PhD student profile page](#) on the CSW website and in social media and other CSW promotions. Students will be expected to provide a short biography, in writing, for the PhD student profile page.

Students will be expected to start meeting basic professional expectations beginning with the first semester in the program. These expectations include: becoming familiar with this handbook; attending class; reading all course material and asking questions in class; engaging in GRA work; taking personal responsibility for understanding degree requirements; meeting agreed upon deadlines and obligations; acting professionally when engaging with CSW faculty, staff, and colleagues; adhering to standards of academic integrity; participating in PhD program events; establishing a research agenda and professional research presence; seeking and using resources to get support to be successful in the program; meeting faculty and becoming familiar with their research; and staying involved with and connected to the CSW as appropriate, among other expectations.

PhD students are expected to establish their academic reputations by demonstrating a strong work ethic, self-directedness, leadership, and initiative upon arrival. Students are responsible for gathering information pertinent to their individual situations to guide their progress in the program. For example, students need to read their CSW and [Hilltopics](#) Graduate School handbooks to be informed about degree requirements. International students should stay in close contact with the [Center for Global Engagement](#) to make sure they are following the requirements for international students.

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

All students admitted to the program who are not on a sponsorship will be offered a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) package to support their full-time PhD studies. A GRA in the CSW is typically a 50% time appointment, which translates into a student working on research or teaching for a total of 20 hours per week, across 12 months of the year, for an annual stipend. GRA support is provided for four years and includes student health insurance and tuition remission. Health insurance and tuition are also provided during the summer semester. Students are responsible for paying some fees, including any fees incurred due to late registration, and covering textbook costs. Students on a GRA receive two weeks of paid vacation, in addition to time off when the University is officially closed, and should take sick time as needed, in consultation with the GRA supervisor. Information about guidelines for the GRA, including expectations for GRA supervisors, is available in **Appendix B**.

GRA students are considered contract employees by the University and the State. GRA contracts are granted for one academic year and renewed on a yearly basis, based on a student's continuing satisfactory performance and appropriate progression towards degree obtainment.

Students on a GRA are expected to work when classes are not in session and during the summer semester, including during fall and spring break (unless they negotiate time off with the GRA supervisor), but they are not expected to work when the University is officially closed. The University is closed for many federal holidays and usually for one week over the winter break. GRA assignments begin on August 1 and continue through July 31 each year. For graduating students, the GRA ends on the last day of the month of graduation.

Students are not permitted to work over 50% of the time within the University, which translates into 20 hours per week. As such, students on a college sponsored GRA are already working at the level of maximum hours and cannot work any additional hours within the College or University while also on the 20-hour GRA.

Occasionally, students can apply to the Graduate School for short term exceptions to this cap on allowable work hours, to do things like add extra hours to their research work, or to get permission to teach a class for additional pay. These exceptions are usually reserved only for students who have completed their coursework and who have made appropriate advancements towards degree obtainment. Students who are interested in getting an exception to the maximum allowable work hours must complete a form, have it signed by the work supervisor and PhD program director, and then submit that form to the Graduate School. The Graduate School does not have to approve these during the summer semesters. Approval of these requests is not guaranteed.

GRA assignments are made during the summer semester in preparation for a start date of Aug. 1, within the PhD program and in consultation with the Associate Deans for Academic Affairs (ADAA) and Research (ADR). Students in coursework with a 50% GRA appointment must be enrolled as full-time students in the PhD program (at least 9 credit hours in each of the Fall and Spring semesters). Students with a 50% GRA who have completed coursework must enroll in at least 6 hours of dissertation research (SW 600) every semester, including summers, until graduation or until the GRA expires.

Questions about the financial aspects of the GRA, such as about paychecks, contracts, health insurance, tuition coverage and account balances, should be directed to the CSW Human Resources office or College business office. Other questions can be directed to the PhD program director and/or PhD program assistant.

GRA funding for graduating students will end on the last day of the month of graduation. This is typically the last day of May for spring graduates, the last day of August for summer graduates, and the last day of December for fall graduates. GRA funding for students who have reached the end of their fourth year but have not graduated will end on the last day of July.

Students who have reached the four-year GRA funding limit but have not yet graduated can appeal to the ADR's office for some temporary support past the end of the 4th year. These opportunities are provided at the discretion of the ADR's office, based on availability and the College's needs, and are not guaranteed.

Students who phase off their GRA at the end of their fourth year without graduating will be responsible for covering tuition and health insurance. Students are encouraged to do their best to graduate before the GRA expires to avoid financial difficulties. It is important that students understand and plan for this.

GRA Expectations

Students on a GRA are assigned to work under the supervision of a college faculty member, who will serve as the GRA supervisor. The GRA supervisor works with the student to outline the student's work schedule, meeting schedule, activities, and deadlines. Students on a GRA should expect to work on research-related activities.

Each student will enter the GRA with varying skill levels. Students should be forthcoming with the GRA supervisor about personal strengths and limitations. The GRA is a time for students to grow into social work researchers and leaders. Open and honest communication and dedication to fulfilling agreed upon responsibilities is paramount to having a successful GRA experience.

GRA duties can be completed in person or remotely using electronic communication, such as via email and video conferences, in agreement with the GRA supervisor.

GRA Evaluations

Toward the end of each fall and spring semester of a GRA, the GRA supervisor and student are expected to meet and evaluate the student's GRA performance for that semester. This meeting will include completing the Semi-Annual Evaluation (GRA supervisor's form) and Semi-Annual Reflection (student's form). The student is responsible for submitting these forms to the program assistant by the established deadline. Evaluation forms for the summer semester are not required.

Expectations for Communication with GRA Supervisors

Students are expected to engage in communication that would usually occur in a professional work setting. As such, students are encouraged to communicate clearly, directly, and frequently with the GRA supervisor. Information on how to communicate with a GRA supervisor/research mentor is

provided in the mentorship guidebook that students receive at orientation.

Students on a GRA are expected to ask questions and clarify expectations to try to avoid misunderstandings about GRA responsibilities. Students are expected to contact their GRA supervisor in a timely manner, in advance whenever possible, anytime there is an instance where a student cannot meet a deadline or fulfill an agreed upon responsibility. Students are expected to consult with their GRA supervisor if they do not have the skills necessary to complete an agreed upon task.

Students are expected to request time off in advance and in collaboration with the GRA supervisor. Students should inform their GRA supervisors when they are ill and need to miss their GRA work, scheduled meetings, or other activities. Students are expected to make up GRA-related work missed during an illness once they are well enough to return to their GRA duties. Students are advised not to come to work when they are unwell or experiencing symptoms of illness.

GRA Supervisor Roles

GRA supervisors are expected to meet with students at the beginning of each academic year to develop a student work plan for the GRA. Expectations for meetings, communication, research activities, deadlines, professional behavior, scheduled time-off, and other requirements for working in the GRA should be clearly communicated to the student at the beginning of each academic year.

GRA supervisors are expected to ensure that students on a GRA are involved in 20 hours per week of supervised research-related work activities. Some students may be paired with one faculty member for 20 hours per week, and some students may be paired with two faculty members working 10 hours per week for each faculty member.

GRA supervisors are expected to provide students with meaningful research and scholarly development opportunities and guidance, with the goal of helping students build their research agendas and scholarly profiles and to prepare students for academic and other research careers. GRA supervisors should involve students in research-related opportunities, including conference submission and presentation, peer-reviewed publication, data collection and/or analysis, grant writing, and other relevant scholarly activities whenever possible and appropriate.

GRA supervisors are expected to create GRA experiences that allow students to work around their class schedules. GRA supervisors are encouraged to allow students time to attend conferences and relevant professional development activities offered by the PhD program whenever possible.

GRA supervisors are expected to communicate clearly with students around work activity expectations and to meet with students regularly to give students guidance and feedback on their work, and to redirect students as needed.

GRA supervisors are encouraged to communicate about problems in a timely manner, directly with the student and with the PhD program director when needed, rather than waiting to identify problems on the evaluation form.

GRA supervisors unable to provide students with suitable GRA opportunities should inform the PhD

director so students can be reassigned.

More information about mentoring graduate students is available in [The Mentoring Guide](#) mentorship handbook that is provided to students and GRA supervisors by the PhD program. GRA supervisors who do not have a copy of the handbook can request one from the PhD program assistant. More information about GRA supervisor guidelines is available under **Appendix B**.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Once a student has completed all the requirements for independent teaching, which, for students entering fall 2023 or after, includes completing the required online teaching certificate modules and a teaching practicum in consultation with the University Teaching & Learning Center (TLI), it may be possible to convert a full GRA into a GRA that is split with a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) or convert the GRA into a full GTA. Students who engage in a GTA will teach courses independently in either the MSSW or BSSW program. GTA opportunities are dependent on college needs and are not guaranteed. Students entering the program in fall 2023 or after should be eligible to teach independently for the first time starting in spring semester 5. Students who wish to move into a GTA should use the spring GRA matching survey to plan for teaching for the following academic year and register their teaching preferences in TAMS. It is recommended that students teach at least one course independently before graduation.

Early Exit from the GRA

Occasionally, situations will arise where the student will need to exit early from the GRA. Such situations could include, but are not limited to, graduating from the program before the fourth year; obtainment of a full-time faculty position outside the College; obtainment of another GRA, assistantship, or funded fellowship inside the University, but outside the College; or obtainment of a full-time position either within or outside the University. Students who experience these or related situations should consult with the PhD program director in a timely manner to plan for an early exit from the GRA. Students who are unsure about whether they need to plan for exiting the GRA should consult with the PhD program director.

Dismissal from the GRA

If a student is not meeting the professional expectations of the GRA, the GRA supervisor is expected to provide this feedback to the student. If the student does not respond to initial feedback about the GRA performance, the GRA supervisor should inform the PhD program director about the problems in writing via email.

If, after receiving performance feedback and guidance for improvement, the student continues to not meet expectations, the student's GRA appointment and continuation in the program may be at risk.

Some examples of not meeting expectations could include but are not limited to: inability to adhere to deadlines, not responding to feedback, not completing agreed upon tasks, not showing up on time or when expected, not conducting oneself professionally, and/or not communicating effectively. Students who cannot perform as expected in the GRA may be reassigned or dismissed from the GRA. Students who need accommodations for their GRA work should collaborate with the [Student Disability Services](#)

office to get an accommodation that is applicable to an employment-based setting.

In certain instances, students may have to be dismissed from the GRA. Students who are dismissed from the GRA will be given a minimum of one month's notice.

PhD STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Understanding Graduate School and Program Requirements

Students have the responsibility of staying current about university policies and procedures at all times as described in the [UTK Graduate Catalog](#), [Hilltopics](#), and other periodic official updates from [the Graduate School](#) and the PhD program office.

Students are also responsible for being informed about PhD program information. Relevant PhD program information is contained in this handbook. Additional information is communicated electronically via weekly email announcements to each student's UTK email and archived in the PhD Student Canvas shell.

Communication through the PhD student Canvas shell: All PhD students will receive an invitation from the program assistant to join the PhD Student Canvas shell, and students are expected to accept this invitation to keep apprised of relevant PhD information.

Importance of UTK email accounts: Email is the university's official method of communication. Students are expected to check their UTK email regularly and to respond to emails promptly, within 24 hours or sooner, when required. Students are expected to thoroughly read this handbook and all PhD announcements, and to go into the archived announcements to re-check information when necessary.

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

Fulfilling GRA Responsibilities

Students receiving graduate assistantships are expected to diligently fulfill the work expectations of their research assistant award. As outlined above, in the College of Social Work, GRAs are typically **50% Full Time Employment (FTE)** appointments which correspond to an expectation of approximately **20 hours of work per week**. Students will work for either one faculty member at 20-hours per week, or for two separate faculty members at 10-hours per week per faculty member. Assistantship duties will vary and are determined by the student's GRA supervisor(s) and the student. Renewal of GRA contracts depends on a student's successful performance in the preceding GRA and appropriate progression towards degree obtainment, as noted above.

Each 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 sections of this handbook.

Scheduling Exams and Defenses

Students in the CSW PhD program will have to schedule two defenses during their time as a PhD student: 1) the comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal defense, and 2) the dissertation defense.

Students are expected to collaborate with their dissertation chair and committee to schedule these defenses. Once an agreed upon date and time has been reached, students should inform the PhD program assistant that the defense has been scheduled. The PhD program assistant will then add the information about the defense to the college calendar and assist the student with booking a room (for in-person meetings) or setting up and distributing a Zoom link (for virtual meetings).

Students should communicate scheduled exams and defenses to the PhD program assistant at least two weeks prior to the defense date to make sure that scheduled exams/defenses are added to the College calendar.

When defenses have been passed, students are responsible for working with the PhD program assistant to make sure that documentation and other necessary information is submitted to the Graduate School.

Coursework Expectations

Students must adhere to the program model outlined in this handbook, which indicates what classes are required and which semester they should be completed. This handbook contains two program models, one for students who entered fall 2022 or earlier, and one for students entering in fall 2023 or later. Students are expected to follow the program model that corresponds with when they began the program. Students are expected to attend all classes, complete assignments on time, and participate actively in class discussions. Students are expected to complete all required online teaching certificate modules. Students are expected to inform their instructor, in advance whenever possible, if they need to miss a class.

All courses that are taken by PhD students using the tuition benefit covered by the GRA must count towards degree obtainment. As such, students cannot take undergraduate courses for electives and any courses taken within the College of Social Work must be at the 600 level or above. Courses taken outside the College must be 500 level or above. PhD students are not eligible for the MSSW level certificate programs because the courses associated with those certificates are offered within the College and not offered at the 600 level or above. Once students have completed the courses required by the program model (at the end of semester 5 of year 2), tuition waivers can only be used to cover required dissertation hours.

Professional Development and College Events

Students are also expected to attend and participate in professional development events offered by the College of Social Work's PhD program. These events (e.g., workshops, faculty spotlights, alumni spotlights, professional development trainings, "job talks" by faculty candidates) provide valuable opportunities for professional development, scholarly growth, and networking with colleagues and

peers. These are also critical for students' socialization into becoming an academic scholar. These events are typically offered virtually so that students in all stages of the program can easily attend. It is up to each student to plan with GRA supervisors to attend these events, and to arrange their schedules in a way that allows event attendance. These events are required unless accommodations to students' schedules cannot be made. Time spent in professional development activities is separate from GRA hours. Students are encouraged, but not required, to attend events designed for respite or socialization, such as PhD luncheons or outings arranged by the PhD student group. Students are, however, expected to attend the end of the year PhD celebration at the end of the academic year whenever possible.

Career Coaching

The PhD program provides group and individual level career coaching for PhD students who are on the job market. The coaching is designed to help students prepare written job materials and develop interview skills. The coaching will begin during the summer semester preceding the student's job search, typically the year before graduation. Participation in career coaching is required.

Communication with Program about Accomplishments

Attention to detail in relation to expectations for communication is an important part of the PhD program.

It is expected that students will regularly communicate scholarly accomplishments to the PhD program. This is a requirement for staying on the GRA. This includes informing the PhD program when peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations are accepted and when a grant is funded. Students are also expected to communicate other related accomplishments, such as notable appointments, honors, or awards. The program uses this information for celebrating student accomplishments and for reporting purposes. During the academic year, the program assistant will ask students to report this information regularly. Students are expected to respond to requests accurately and in a timely manner. Students are expected to provide an APA style citation when reporting publications and presentations.

Responsibilities around Electronic Communication

To keep students apprised of relevant information, the PhD program regularly distributes written electronic messages to students in the form of emails and announcements that are generated from within the PhD student Canvas course. **Students are required to read and consider all written communication.** Students can be negatively impacted when they fail to engage with written communication. It is the student's responsibility to engage in this communication.

Below are some minimum expectations for PhD students around written communication:

1. Students should be prepared to receive relevant written electronic communication from the PhD program, College, Graduate School, and University.
2. Students should understand that all electronic written communication is valuable to know, even if it does not seem relevant to each student individually.
3. Students should seek general information to guide their degree progression from the PhD

student handbook.

4. Students should carefully read, consider, and respond within 24 hours or sooner, to official emails transmitted to the student's UTK email.
5. Students should carefully read, consider, and respond when necessary to all announcements that are generated from the PhD student Canvas shell (these are also delivered to the student's UTK email).
6. Students should know how to access the PhD student Canvas shell and search the archived Canvas announcements for PhD program information that is needed.
7. Students should become familiar with the materials housed in the PhD student canvas shell, which include links to important forms and relevant files.
8. Students should use written communication, including the announcements generated from the PhD Canvas shell, to understand general information about the PhD program.
9. Students must be responsible for completing required forms (i.e., GRA matching forms, teaching practicum planning, GRA evaluation forms, independent study forms, dissertation committee forms, comprehensive exam and dissertation defense forms, etc.). Information about forms is provided in the handbook, Canvas shell, and on the Graduate School website. Students are expected to meet deadlines for form submission without requiring repeated reminders.
10. Students are responsible for gaining and understanding the information necessary to meet the social work PhD program requirements.

Program Verification for Student Requests

Students who need verification of program enrollment/status or related letters of support should email a paragraph explaining the request to the PhD program assistant and copy the PhD program director. Examples of this include confirmation of student status for memberships, conference registrations, or documentation for a government or military sponsor. The program needs an advanced notice of at least two weeks to prepare this documentation, when possible.

Ethical, Academic, and Professional Conduct

Students in a graduate program in social work are simultaneously participating in 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 [National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics](#), the [Council on Social Work Education professional standards](#), and the University behavioral guidelines in [Hilltopics](#).

Academic Conduct

The academic environment facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to develop and disseminate it. Earning a PhD degree requires, 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

excellence, building of scientific knowledge, and to an understanding of knowledge. Consequently, **plagiarism, or any other form of cheating, is counter 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 they must comply with academic standards in this regard. Failure to properly cite the ideas of others is considered theft of intellectual property, which is a serious offense that may result in dismissal from the program. While it is understood that artificial intelligence (AI) assisted technology is available as a tool for research and writing, it is expected that students who use such tools will ensure that they are assistive only. As such, it is expected that students will generate and submit work that is a product of their own intellect.

Social work uses the most recent version of the American Psychological Association manual to guide writing style. Guidelines for proper referencing and citations can be found in the current [Style Guide of the American Psychological Association](#).

Academic integrity is an important responsibility of all members of the academic community. An honor statement is included in the online application for admission and readmission. Submitting the application acknowledges that adherence to the following statement is confirmed:

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, conducting research without IRB approval, and/or other acts of academic dishonesty are reprehensible, unacceptable, and counter to the purposes for which the University exists.

Professional Conduct

In addition to maintaining acceptable academic standards, students must behave professionally and ethically towards their student colleagues, faculty, research subjects, and all others. This includes avoiding any harassment of others based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or other identities. Because membership in the social work profession implies an encompassing set of professional values, professional conduct that aligns with social work ethics, values, and principles is always expected, on-campus and off-campus, including at professional conferences.

The College adheres to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#). Students are advised to familiarize themselves with its provisions. Violations of the NASW Code of Ethics can result in dismissal from the PhD program.

Social work educational programs are also governed by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) [Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards](#) guidelines. These guidelines include Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior. Students are expected to adhere to the CSWE guidelines

for professional conduct.

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.

Academic and Professional Standards Review Policies and Procedures (including grade appeals process if not resolved through the process outlined later in the handbook)

On occasion, there may be instances where student conduct requires a hearing with the academic and professional standards committee. The process for this hearing is outlined in **Appendix A**.

College of Social Work's (CSW's) Academic and 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 student academic, behavioral, and or professional standards and to address concerns that have not been resolved through other student support procedures in the College. This committee will also consider dismissals from the PhD program. Examples include unsatisfactory progress in courses and practicum, ongoing issues with professional behaviors (i.e., poor attendance, tardiness, missing/late assignments), inability to demonstrate successful absorption of material, lack of adequate progress towards degree obtainment, and/or not adhering to the core values described in the NASW Code of Ethics, among others. The process for these procedures is listed under **Appendix A**.

Advising

Students can seek general advisement anytime from the PhD program director, their assigned advisor, and from the PhD advisors in the College's student services department.

Incoming students will be assigned a **faculty advisor** (typically separate from the GRA supervisor). Students can use this advisor relationship to seek mentorship independent from other relationships in the program. Students are encouraged to utilize this relationship to orient to the College, the PhD program, and academia, overall.

Student Records

Any student wishing to see their records may place a request to do so through the program assistant and copy the PhD program director. Exceptions to this right are reference letters if the student has previously waived their right to read such letters.

Student Grade Appeal Process

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Tennessee's Standards of Conduct, and social work professional conduct, as noted previously. 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 review process for violation of academic or professional standards is

described above.

The College of Social Work maintains additional standards of professional conduct. These standards address the cognitive, emotional, and character requirements 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 the College will follow when violations of these standards are alleged and the appeal process after decisions are made about the allegations.

Students who have a grade dispute should first discuss this directly with their instructor. If there is not a satisfactory resolution at the instructor level, students can elevate their concern to the PhD program director. From there, concerns should be directed to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA) and then up to the Dean. This recommended process for dispute resolution follows the College's organizational structure, which can be found here in this [organizational chart](#).

Students with grievances concerning grades that are not adequately resolved within the College 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 grade appeal process by first appealing in writing, via email, 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). The course instructor is expected to reply to the student in writing, via email, within 14 days of the initial complaint.
- If no resolution with the instructor is reached, the student may initiate the formal appeal process through a written email to the PhD program director. The course instructor should respond in writing to the student appeal and this response must be forwarded with the

student's appeal email to the PhD program director. This appeal must be submitted to the PhD program director no later than 14 days after receiving a written response from the course instructor.

- If the matter is not resolved at the PhD program director level, the student may then appeal via email to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA). All existing correspondence related to the dispute should be forwarded to the ADAA along with an explanation from the student indicating why there has not been a satisfactory resolution. This must be done within 14 days of receiving a decision from the PhD program director.
- If the matter is not resolved with the ADAA, the student may then appeal in writing to the Dean of the College of Social Work. Appeals to the Dean must be submitted no later than 14 days after receiving a written response from the ADAA. Appeals to the Dean should include forwarding all previous correspondence regarding the dispute to the Dean's email.
- 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.

Student Representation, Communication and Workspace

Representative for PhD Program

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. The service term is one year, and students can serve up to two terms.

Students can also volunteer to serve as a student representative on other College and University level committees (i.e., Dean's advisory committee, graduate council).

PhD Program Ambassadors

Annually, the PhD program will seek out students to represent the program as PhD Student Ambassadors. These students will aid during orientation, the year-end event, and at other events, as needed. These students will also mentor incoming students, and assist staff to meet event goals, as needed. PhD Student Ambassadors will receive an hourly stipend for their work.

PhD Student Group

The College of Social Work has a student group specifically for PhD students: the Social Work PhD Student Organization. All PhD students are automatically members from enrollment until the end of their graduation month. Dues are not required. Officers will be elected every spring with new officers taking office each fall. The officers include a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The officers are responsible for organizing regular meetings and planning student group activities. The purpose of the group is to provide a way of organizing student-led activities and collectively communicating with the College administration. More information about the organizational structure can be found at [Vollink](#).

One primary function of the PhD student group is to create community among PhD students. The PhD student group can organize social activities on or off campus. The PhD student group can also sponsor events on campus. A faculty member must be present for any on campus event sponsored by the PhD student group. As such, the student group should meet with the PhD program director before the fall semester to plan any sponsored events in advance. Students are free to organize social and respite events, and these do not have to include faculty supervision.

Student Communication with the College

Occasionally students may have concerns that they want to communicate to the College. Collective concerns should be documented by the student group secretary during regular student group meetings and then provided to the appropriate College administrator, in accordance with the College's organizational chart (usually this process would start with the PhD program director). Individual student concerns should be brought to the PhD program director who will then assist the student or help direct them to other appropriate administrators or additional resources.

Concerns about the program not resolved at the program level should be directed to the ADAA, in accordance with the College's organizational chart.

To find the most up to date organizational chart, click on the organization chart on the College form's website: [CSW Up-to-Date College Documents](#)

Student Offices

Students have access to a common PhD student office on the 5th floor level of Stokley Management Center (SMC) which is available on a daily, first come, first served basis. By University policy, students may not have any personal appliances (other than a personal computer), including refrigerators, coffeepots, or heaters in the PhD student office. PhD students have access to the student lounge on the fifth floor of SMC which has tables, refrigerator, and a microwave.

The UTK library has [graduate commons](#) which include graduate work stations and a lounge. This area is designed to support data analysis and dissertation work. Students can also reserve carrels and meeting room space for small groups. CSW PhD students are encouraged to make use of the [Library Spaces for Graduate Students](#).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Expenses and Financial Assistance

Information about fees and tuition costs can be found in the current UTK Graduate Catalog. Fees and tuition are a significant part of the cost of a student's education. Most fees and/or tuition are waived for graduate assistants on a 50% FTE (20 hour) or higher appointment, and the length of time that the PhD 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 Assistantships and Student Loans can be found [here](#).

Travel Support

The College of Social Work has budgeted conference and professional development travel funds for each student receiving a GRA. Travel allowances correspond to the University budget year, so they begin July 1 and end June 30 of the following year. The PhD program does not cover any travel expenses for faculty. Students are expected to be presenting if they use the travel funds. Students should contact the PhD program assistant or the PhD program director for information about the annual allowance, which may vary each academic year. Travel allowances are intended to cover participation in one professional conference annually. Students are encouraged to budget their travel allowances to stretch them in accordance with their intended travel plans. After students have spent their travel allowance, they will have to cover their own travel expenses. Approval of travel expenses is at the discretion of the PhD program and is not guaranteed.

The PhD program director must approve all PhD student travel. To seek approval, students should review the process in the appendices below. Travel will not be approved or processed without the required information, which is detailed in the appendices.

Students who are not presenting, and who are not first year students, but who have a professional reason for wishing to attend a conference (i.e. to meet with a specific mentor or to engage in interviews), should reach out to the PhD program director to ask for an exemption to the presentation requirement.

Sometimes additional travel support, exceeding the yearly allotment, can be provided on a case-by-case basis. Additional requests should be made directly to the PhD program director via email, copying the program assistant in accordance with the procedures in Appendix D.

To receive travel support, students must follow the procedures outlined in Appendix D. Additional details about international travel can also be found in Appendix D.

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. Availability of travel funds for students will depend on budgetary decisions of the College and University. The program assistant can provide information and answer questions about travel support.

Note: Students who wish to be reimbursed for conference attendance must retain a copy of the conference program schedule and a copy of the conference hotel rates and affiliated overflow hotel rates to submit with their reimbursement requests. Students should copy the conference schedule and corresponding hotel rates BEFORE the conference, as these typically disappear after the conference ends. Failure to submit these required documents will result in a delay or denial of reimbursement requests at the University level. Questions about this should be

directed to the PhD program assistant.

Note: Students on a sponsorship (e.g. self-pay, military, government sponsorship, etc.) rather than a GRA are expected to cover their own expenses although the PhD program assistant will provide technical support with travel arrangements.

Other Financial Support

The PhD program may be able to assist students with other expenses, including open-access publication fees, printing costs, and relevant professional memberships. Students seeking this type of support should email the PhD program director and copy the PhD program assistant before incurring the expense. The email request should include information about estimated costs and a short paragraph justification for the expense. Requests will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis, are not guaranteed, and are subject to approval and budget availability.

REGISTRATION FOR COURSES

Registration

All students are required to register online within their respective MyUTK accounts. Registration instructions can be found at [One Stop Student Services](#). Students should check their own MyUTK portal for specific registration dates.

Except for first-semester graduate students, all students are expected to register for courses during Priority Registration. A late registration fee will be assessed to students who register during the Late Registration period and a student's GRA will not pay for late registration fees incurred by the student. Priority Registration allows for sufficient time for the department to adjust its teaching loads and course offerings.

Coursework Requirements

Course requirements for the PhD degree as specified in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Graduate Catalog must be satisfied.

The PhD director or another faculty member who recognizes a student's need or deficit may recommend or require additional courses or specific options for a student, based on their performance on the PhD comprehensive examination (see Comprehensive Examination section), their performance in class, or their performance in their GRA. Examples of additional requirements could include: an additional writing class or another course to elevate a specific skillset, writing or statistics tutoring, additional supervised teaching, etc. All coursework must ultimately be approved by the PhD Program.

The Graduate School defines the guidelines for the minimum and maximum course credit hours for graduate students. The minimum number of credit hours a graduate student with a 50% (20 hour per week) time GRA must register for to be in compliance with the Graduate School is six hours, and the maximum credit hours allowed is 15.

The CSW program model requires students who are in coursework to register for between 10-12 credit hours per semester, which falls between the minimum and maximum credit hours set by the Graduate School. The program model is structured this way to make it possible for students to graduate in 3-4 years.

Students may petition the Graduate School to take up to 18 hours.

All PhD students are advised to complete all course requirements, except for dissertation hours, before relocating away from campus.

Tuition Coverage

Students who are on a GRA will receive coverage of tuition to complete only the courses necessary for the PhD in social work. Students are welcome to obtain a minor outside the College if the requirements can be met using the allotted elective courses within the PhD program model. If a minor requires more hours than the PhD program will cover, the program will not cover tuition for additional courses. Tuition coverage will not be provided for any additional courses beyond the required SW 600 dissertation hours after a student has completed coursework at the end of the second year of the program, unless there is a special circumstance where a course is recommended by the program director or a member of the student's dissertation committee (e.g. an additional writing course). Students are expected to complete all required coursework within the first two academic years of the program and then students should proceed to register for dissertation hours (SW 600) beginning with the summer semester following the spring semester of their second year.

Dissertation Hours (SW 600)

Once coursework is completed, which is typically after the end of the spring semester of the student's second year in the program, students who are on a GRA must register for a minimum of 6 credits of dissertation hours per semester, including summer, until they either phase off the GRA funding at the end of year four or until graduation, whichever occurs first. PhD students are not required to register for dissertation hours during any of the mini-terms, but they must register for dissertation hours during every fall, spring, and summer semester from the time they begin dissertation hours until they graduate.

Students who are *not* on a GRA must register for at least 3 credits of dissertation hours per semester until graduation, including summer. Students who have phased off the GRA but have not yet graduated will be responsible for paying their tuition for the remaining dissertation hours.

The Graduate School requires all students to register continuously for at least 3 credit-hours of dissertation hours every semester once they begin their dissertation research. This continuous registration includes summer semesters and is required even if the student leaves the campus, accepts full-time employment, etc. Students must register for these hours each semester until all requirements for graduation, including final approval of the dissertation by the Graduate School, have been met.

Students who exit the GRA without graduating, including those who phase off after four years, or those who exit early, will be responsible for covering their own tuition and health insurance costs.

Students must reach 24 dissertation hours to graduate, so they must register for as many hours per

semester as needed to reach the required number of hours before graduation.

Course Substitutions

Occasionally, a student may wish to substitute a course that has already been completed for one of the program's required courses. Students who are considering this should first submit a written email request to the PhD program director that includes a proposed justification for the course substitution and a copy of the syllabus from the previously completed course. If the PhD program director determines that the course a student has completed covered content similar enough to the course that the student wants to substitute, then the PhD program director will present the student's request to the PhD program committee for a vote. If a majority of the PhD program committee votes to approve the substitution, the student will be allowed to take a research or statistics elective in place of the course they wish to substitute. Students should note that they must add the substituted course to the appropriate forms. Course substitutions are not guaranteed to be approved. Students must have earned a B or higher in any course they want to petition to substitute.

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 meeting of a class without prior arrangement with the instructor 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 been successfully unenrolled from the course. Students who do not successfully drop a course and who do not attend the course can expect to be assigned a grade of F, which is why students are advised to check to confirm that courses have been successfully dropped. Dropping a required PhD level social work course will put a student off the program model, which may risk a student's ability to continue in the program, and which will likely delay graduation.

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 (students should check the University calendar to confirm this date each semester). Before this deadline, the student may drop without a "W," or a student can 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 PhD 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.

If a dropped course puts a student under the required number of hours, then there may be financial implications for the GRA. Students who need to drop a course who will fall below the required number of hours should inform the PhD program director and the ADR.

Independent Studies

Students wishing to conduct research in an area of individual interest may seek a faculty member to provide an independent study course experience. Independent study courses can count for one of the PhD student's electives. In order to ensure that students stay within the credit-hours outlined in the program model, it is expected that students will register for **three credit hours** for the independent study course.

PhD students may complete only one elective as an independent study. If there is a need to do more than one independent study, for example, to fulfill requirements for a minor or certificate, students can appeal to the PhD director for an exception to this policy.

The PhD program director must approve all independent study courses 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. Students must complete the Independent Study Course Approval Form and describe the plan for the course, including the course topic, learning objectives, and a sample reading list.
2. This proposal must be approved by the instructor and the PhD program director before registration.
3. Students should register for the independent study under the section that corresponds with the instructor who will be supervising their independent study.

Teaching Practicum

For Students Entering Fall 2022 or Before

Students who entered the program prior to fall of 2023 will need to complete two teaching practicum courses, preferably one online and one face-to-face, and these correspond to SW 677 and SW 678.

For Students Entering Fall 2023 or Later

After the completion of the required UTK Teaching & Learning Institute (TLI) online teaching certificate modules (see below for more details), students will be required to complete Teaching Practicum I (SW 677) and can choose to complete an optional Teaching Practicum II (SW 678). Expectations for the teaching practicum classes are provided in more detail below and in **Appendix C**.

UTK Teaching & Learning Institute (TLI) Self-paced Teaching Certificate Modules

All students will be required to complete three self-paced UTK Teaching and Learning Innovation's online modules before summer semester 3. These online course modules are prerequisites for SW 675, SW

677 and SW 678 and for independent teaching. These can be completed before the PhD program begins, concurrent with the semester, or during a semester break.

The modules below are required. Students are encouraged to complete other TLI modules, as desired:

- [UT CIRTl Associates Course for Grad Students & Post Docs](#);
- [UT Inclusive Teaching Certificate](#);
- [Fostering the Volunteer Experience](#)
- [UT TLI Course Based Assessment](#)

After completion of the prerequisite TLI self-paced teaching certificate modules, students must also complete one teaching practicum (SW 677) **in conjunction with a classroom consultation observation from a teaching expert at the UTK TLI**. The TLI observation should be concurrent with enrollment in SW 677 and it is required. Students should complete the Teaching Practicum Planning Form and submit this to the program assistant within the first 10 days of the semester in which the practicum is planned.

Students should visit the TLI website and complete an [individual instructor service request](#) prior to beginning the SW 677 teaching practicum. The TLI teaching expert will provide guidance and consultation as the student advances through the teaching practicum. All students must complete the online modules and one teaching practicum before being eligible for independent teaching within the College.

Teaching or Research Focus Options within the Program

Teaching focus: Students who wish to gain additional information and experience with teaching can choose to enroll in SW 675, which is the College's teaching pedagogy course. This course is recommended for those who wish to gear their careers more towards faculty positions that require teaching. This course will most likely be offered during winter mini term, and it is recommended that students take this class during their second year.

Students who want more experience with teaching can also elect to complete a second teaching practicum (SW 678) after they have completed the required teaching practicum (SW 677). Students who choose to do this should register for SW 678 for one credit hour. This is recommended for anyone who wishes to gain more practice with their teaching before moving into independent teaching. Students who choose to complete two teaching practicum experiences will graduate with one additional credit hour. The PhD program may require students who need additional experience in co-teaching to complete a second teaching practicum.

Students in either teaching practicum class (677 or 678) should complete the Teaching Practicum Planning Form and submit this to the program assistant within the first 10 days of the semester in which the practicum is planned. Information about expectations for teaching practica is available in **Appendix C**.

Research focus: Students should register for SW 604, which is the Community Engaged Social Work Research course during the summer 3 semester, unless they wish to take another research elective that is associated with a minor or another specific goal. This class is recommended for students who plan to

focus their careers on faculty positions at research-oriented institutions or other research-oriented careers. With prior approval from the PhD program director, students can also substitute another research method or statistics elective if they need to for a specific goal (e.g., a different course is needed to count towards a minor).

Students Entering Fall 2022 or Before

Concurrent with, or after completing, SWK 675, students will complete at least two teaching practica (SW 677 and SW 678; 1 credit hour each). For each practicum, the student will work as a supervised teaching assistant for one semester under the direction of a full-time College of Social Work faculty member. It is preferred that one practicum be for a traditional, face-to-face course and one practicum be for a distance education, virtual course. Students should complete the Teaching Practicum Planning Form and submit this to the program assistant within the first 10 days of the semester in which the practicum is planned.

Note: For **students who entered fall 2022 or before:** SW 675, 677, and 678 must be taken and successfully completed before a student may request to do any independent teaching, including requesting to split their GRA into a GRA-GTA or before a student can switch to a GTA-only assistantship. For **students entering fall 2023 or after:** the TLI self-paced teaching certificate modules and SW 677 + TLI consultation observation must be completed before students can do any independent teaching, including splitting their GRA into a GRA-GTA or switching to a GTA-only assistantship.

Students are expected to introduce themselves to different faculty members and secure their own teaching practicum arrangements. Students can complete a teaching practicum with any full-time faculty member at the College on either the Knoxville or Nashville campus. Students can do a teaching practicum for a class at any level in the program. If a student wants to do a teaching practicum for a PhD level course, the student must have already successfully completed that course.

Students can do a teaching practicum in fall, spring, or summer semesters, but not during mini term.

Arranging the teaching practicum: 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 practicum mentors. It is the responsibility of the student to secure teaching practicum mentor and students are expected to work with a different mentor for each practicum.

Teaching Practicum Supervision

Please see Appendix C for more information about expectations for supervision of teaching practicum students.

Teaching and Learning Institute

[Teaching and Learning Innovation](#)

UT [CIRTL: Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning](#)

Continuous Enrollment

All degree-seeking students are expected to make a full commitment to their graduate studies in order to ensure that they can complete all degree requirements without unnecessary delay. Graduate students are therefore required to maintain an active status through continuous enrollment from the time of first enrollment until graduation. (Per Graduate School policy, doctoral students who are registered for level 600 dissertation hours can apply, in special circumstances, for an exemption to the continuous enrollment requirement).

The Graduate School defines continuous enrollment as being maintained by registering for a minimum of one graduate credit hour per semester (excluding the summer, unless stipulated otherwise by the program or department). However, students who have started taking dissertation hours (course 600-Dissertation) must maintain a minimum of 3 credit hours per semester during all semesters, including the summer, in order to comply with the Continuous Enrollment requirement.

Special Note for International Students. The minimum enrollment for international students may be different, and international students always need to check with the [Center for Global Engagement](#) (CGE) in order to determine minimum enrollment requirements that are specific to their visa. Typically, international students who are enrolled in a Knoxville based, on campus program can only take one course that is offered in an online format per semester. It is important for international students to stay informed about related regulations pertaining to their country of origin, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure compliance with these regulations.

Leave of Absence

Students facing extenuating circumstances can request a leave of absence (LOA) from the program. 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. LOA requests must be submitted to and approved by the PhD program director. If the director approves the request, the student will [submit the request](#) electronically to the Dean of the Graduate School, who must also approve the leave. Supporting documentation must be submitted with the LOA form. An email note of support from the PhD program director may be included, if needed. All LOAs are reviewed and granted on a case-by-case basis and are neither automatic nor guaranteed. The request should be made in advance whenever possible.

Because the CSW PhD program is a full-time program, students returning from an LOA must be able to return to the program on a full-time basis.

A LOA is a temporary cessation of study and may be granted for up to two (2) years for medical reasons and other serious circumstances. A LOA allows graduate students in good academic standing to postpone their studies for a definite period of time, not to exceed two (2) years in the event of unavoidable circumstances (e.g., documented medical reasons, active military duty, etc.).

If a student on an approved LOA needs to use faculty time and/or University facilities, the student would need to terminate their leave by registering for a minimum of 3 dissertation hours for that semester. Per University policy, students on a LOA may not use University facilities.

Students on a LOA will fall off of their GRA and, as such, need to be responsible for their own health insurance. Students who are unable to return to the program within the 2-year limit will be withdrawn from the program. Students in good academic standing who wish to return after being withdrawn can re-apply to the program for consideration for re-admission.

Time Limit to Graduate

In accordance with Graduate School guidelines, **all comprehensive PhD examinations must be completed within five years**, and **all PhD requirements must be completed within eight years**, from the time of a student's first enrollment in a doctoral degree program. The semester(s) and/or year(s) of an approved [Graduate Student Leave of Absence](#) (LOA) will not be counted toward time to degree, and milestone deadlines such as Admission to Candidacy will be adjusted accordingly.

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.

PROCEDURES FOR PHD IN SOCIAL WORK

Funding for Dissertation Research

Students are expected to fund any expenses associated with their dissertation work. Expenses can include participant research incentives, software or electronic equipment, postage, and/or fees for measurement tools, among others. Students are welcome and encouraged to apply for internal and external grant opportunities to fund dissertation expenses. However, all expenses not covered by a grant must be paid for by the student. Students can request funding assistance for dissertation expenses from the PhD program, yet the availability of program funding varies based on the CSW budget and is not guaranteed.

Procedures for Forms

Please seek assistance from the program assistant any time you need to fill out and submit a required form. Some forms must be submitted only to the College of Social Work PhD Program office. Other forms must also be submitted to the Graduate School. Necessary forms should be completed by the student prior to meetings, exams, and defenses.

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.

Summary 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). A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation from the UTK CSW PhD program. All courses must count towards degree obtainment, and graduate students are not allowed to take undergraduate-only courses.
2. **Completion of required foundation courses (34 hours).**
 - a. Students entering fall 2022 or before: 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, SW606, SW608, 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, SW665, SW675, SW680, SW677, SW 678, plus 9 hours of electives. These courses total 34 hours of required coursework.
 - b. For students entering fall 2023 or later: 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, SW606, SW608, and SW633, plus the required TLI teaching certificate modules. The following required courses should be completed by the end of the spring semester of the second year for most full-time students: SW603, SW 665, SW 604 (or 675), and SW677 (Teaching Practicum I) and SW678 (optional Teaching Practicum II), plus 9 hours of electives. These courses total 34 hours of required coursework.
3. **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 within the College of Social Work must be at the 600 level; elective courses outside the College may be either 500 or 600 level courses. All courses taken using GRA tuition benefits must count towards degree obtainment.
 - a. The residency requirement for PhD students is a minimum of two consecutive semesters of full-time registration. **As noted, 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).**
 - b. 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 Director and Committee.

Note: Though a PhD student's foundation coursework and electives must be completed at the Knoxville campus, the student's graduate research assistantships, teaching practicum, 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.

4. **Appointment and approval of PhD (i.e., dissertation) committee.** Students are responsible for choosing a dissertation committee chair and the additional committee members. Students must have their committees formed and officially approved prior to the drafting and defense of the comprehensive exam. Students should set the goal for forming their committee by May 30 following the end of spring semester 5 (the end of the second academic year after coursework is completed). 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 program assistant when completing the dissertation committee form (or any forms required for the program).
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 solely for SW600 (usually during summer semester 6), registration must be continuous (for a minimum of 6 hours per semester for students on the GRA, and 3 hours per semester for students phased off the GRA), 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. Students must complete a minimum of 24 total hours of SW 600 in order to graduate, so each student is responsible for deciding how to divide up the SW 600 hours to ensure this minimum is reached before the expected graduation date.
6. **Passing of the comprehensive examination (scholarly paper, dissertation proposal and presentation).** The defense of the comprehensive examination, which also incorporates the student’s dissertation proposal defense, should be completed only after all required coursework and electives have been successfully completed. Students may begin work on the comprehensive exam as early as during spring semester 5, but those who begin early must have a committee in place prior to initiating the comprehensive exam draft. The College requires that that defense and acceptance of the comprehensive exam/dissertation proposal occur **prior** to beginning actual work on the dissertation research itself. To document the passing of the comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal defense, the committee chair and student should send an email to the PhD program director and copy the program assistant. The email should confirm that the student has passed the comprehensive exam and the dissertation proposal defense. This email will be placed in the student’s file by the program assistant.

Per Graduate School policy, the comprehensive examination and dissertation proposal defense must be completed and accepted **within five years of initial enrollment** in the PhD program. Students in the Social Work PhD program typically complete the comprehensive exam/dissertation proposal defense within one year after completion of coursework.

7. **Admission to candidacy.** Request for admission to candidacy must be submitted by each student working on a graduate degree. Once the comprehensive exam has been defended and passed, then the student should submit their application to candidacy. The request for admission to candidacy may **not** be submitted until after the comprehensive examination has been defended and passed. Students who have passed their comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal defense are considered official candidates for the PhD and can therefore refer to themselves as PhD candidates rather than PhD students. **PhD students must apply for admission to candidacy at least one semester before graduation. Failure to do this could delay graduation.** Please seek help from the program assistant when filling out required forms.
8. **Completion of the dissertation research and the dissertation document under the direction of the student's PhD committee.** The cost of research undertaken to fulfill dissertation requirements is the student's responsibility.
9. **Applying to graduate and paying the graduation fee.** Students must apply to graduate on myUTK, so do not overlook this crucial step.
10. Submit a **preliminary draft of your dissertation** online in [TRACE](#) for review by the coordinator of student services. Preliminary drafts can be in early outline or rough draft form, but they are required by the deadline to initiate the graduation process. Failure to submit a preliminary draft by the deadline may result in your dissertation not being reviewed before the final deadline for TRACE acceptance. For instructions on submitting your dissertation please [visit the submission page](#). If you have questions about the submission process, please contact thesis@utk.edu.
11. **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.
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 dissertation hours that next semester. This can prevent the student from having to pay tuition fees for that subsequent semester. Again, the student should consult the Graduate School calendar for deadlines each semester.

Scheduling of final oral defense of dissertation with the Graduate School by submitting the [Schedule of Dissertation form electronically](#). The student must formally 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 program assistant is involved in this process.

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.

Final oral defense of dissertation with PhD committee must occur by the [deadline](#) set by the Graduate School.

Note: At your defense, there are two forms that must be present: the [Report of Final](#)

[Examination/Dissertation Defense/Project/Capstone \(Pass/Fail\)](#) form and the [Thesis/Dissertation Approval](#) form. After the defense/final exam, your committee will provide the signatures on both forms, indicating that you have passed. You will be responsible for getting those original signed forms to the Graduate School by the deadline dates.

12. 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 (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 [here](#). All copies of the dissertation submitted to the University are electronic.

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. The final copy of the dissertation must be submitted to TRACE by the deadline on the Graduate School calendar. Students will not graduate if the final copy of the dissertation has not been approved by the graduate school.

13. Payment of all fees, fines, etc., and removal of any incompletes. Incompletes must be removed by the instructor according to the deadline specified in the Graduate School calendar.

SOCIAL WORK PHD COURSEWORK PROGRAM MODEL FALL 2023+

SEMESTER 1 -FALL	CREDIT HOURS
601 Research for Social Work Practice I	3
605 Analysis of Social Work Data I	3
626 Critical Thinking for Science & Research	3
628 Critical Review of Research Literature	3
Complete required UT TLI asynchronous teaching certificates: Prior to or concurrent with fall semester or during winter break (must be completed before students can teach independently and prior to the end of spring semester 5): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UT CIRTL Associates Course for Grad Students & Post Docs; • UT Inclusive Teaching Certificate; • Fostering the Volunteer Experience • UT TLI Course Based Assessment 	n/a- pre-requisite for SW 677
SEMESTER 2 –SPRING (students who want to teach in spring semester 5 must arrange a GRA-GTA split by the end of spring semester 2 and register with TAMS)	
602 Research for Social Work Practice II	3
606 Analysis of Social Work Data II	3
608 Qualitative Research Methods	3
633 Professional Development for Social Work Scholars	3
SEMESTER 3- SUMMER	

604 Community Engaged Social Work Research (this class is recommended unless students need a different class for a specific minor or other goal) OR Approved elective	3
677 Teaching Practicum I (online or in person) with TLI classroom observation consultation- may be taken in summer semester 3 or fall semester 4	1
SEMESTER 4- FALL- (students who want to begin working on the comprehensive exam in spring semester 5 should finalize their dissertation chair and committee prior to the beginning of spring semester 5)	
603 Research II: Funded Research & Grant Writing	3
665 Advanced Quantitative Research Methods (recommended) or approved advanced statistics elective	3
**677 Teaching Practicum I with TLI classroom observation consultation (if not completed in summer 3) OR **678 Teaching Practicum II (optional)	1 1-optional
Advanced Elective (research methods, statistics, substantive area)	3
WINTER MINI TERM (OPTIONAL)	
SW 675 (this is an opportunity to take our teaching course with colleagues in the DSW program)- optional, counts as an elective	3
SEMESTER 5 SPRING (students who have completed the teaching modules, and the teaching practicum can choose to teach independently for the first time this semester, if prearranged)	
Advanced Elective (research methods, statistics, substantive area)	3
Advanced Elective (research methods, statistics, substantive area)	3
SW 600- Dissertation Hours- students who are ready can finalize dissertation committee and begin work on comprehensive exam (register under the name of committee chair)	1-3
SEMSTER 6- SUMMER (students eligible for independent teaching)	
SW 600- Dissertation Hours- students must register for minimum of 6 hours while on a GRA and minimum 3 hours when not on GRA from this semester until graduation. A minimum of 24 SW 600 Dissertation Hours are required- students should schedule hours based on expected graduation date.	6+
SEMSTER 7- FALL (students eligible for independent teaching)	
SW 600- Dissertation Hours	6+
SEMSTER 8- SPRING (students eligible for independent teaching)	
SW 600- Dissertation Hours	6+
SEMSTER 9- SUMMER (students eligible for independent teaching)	
SW 600- Dissertation Hours	6+
SEMSTER 10- FALL (students eligible for independent teaching)	
SW 600- Dissertation Hours	6+
SEMSTER 11- SPRING (students eligible for independent teaching)- final semester for GRA support	

SW 600- Dissertation Hours Expected graduation this semester or before	6+
<p>TOTAL HOURS</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>Students must take SW 604 (Community Engaged Social Work Research) or another approved elective during summer semester 3.</p> <p>SW 675 is offered online during winter mini-term in conjunction with the DSW students and can be taken as an elective, too.</p> <p>677 Teaching Practicum I (online or in person), required, in conjunction with TLI classroom observation consultation. Pre-requisite: TLI certificate modules.</p> <p>678 Teaching Practicum II (online or in person), optional, for those who wish to get more supervised practice in the classroom before teaching independently</p>	67+ total hours

PHD COURSEWORK PROGRAM MODEL FALL 2022 or BEFORE

Semester I	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
Semester II	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
Semester III	Credit Hrs.
SWK 603: Research III: Funded Research and Grant Writing	3
SWK 675: Teaching Methods in Social Work	3
Advanced Statistics Requirement- SW 665 or statistics elective	3
SWK 677 or 678: Teaching Practicum I (face-to-face) or II (online)	1
Semester IV	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
Semester V-VI	Credit Hrs.
SW 600 (Dissertation Hours)	Varies by student*
Semester VII-VIII	Credit Hrs.

SW 600 (Dissertation Hours)	Varies by student*
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* 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 Research and/or Teaching Assistantships, (3) in teaching 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 probation is as stated: "Upon completion of 3 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 as stated: "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 the GRA or GTA, if a

student is holding one, maybe discontinued. Consistent with University policy, the College of Social Work has a separate policy for continuation in the PhD program subsequent to being placed on academic probation: **when a PhD student's GPA drops below a cumulative 3.0, the student will have one subsequent semester in which to elevate the GPA to or above a 3.0. Failure to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater in that subsequent semester will result in termination from the program.**

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in their courses. There may also be special opportunities for students to experience 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.**

Explanation of Incomplete Grading

The graduate school defines the grade of "incomplete" or "I" as 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 the grade of "I" has not been removed and 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 a grade 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*.)

SCHOLARLY PROGRESS

The PhD Program will 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. This will include GRA semi-annual reflection forms, and Teaching Practicum evaluation forms. Students in coursework who are completing courses successfully in accordance with the program model, adhering to professional ethics and standards, and who are performing up to expected standards in the GRA are considered to be progressing effectively towards degree.

Once students complete all coursework, it is expected that students will be actively working towards the completion of the comprehensive exam followed by completion of the dissertation (i.e. forming a committee, meeting with committee members, writing, and incorporating feedback). Students should have the goal of forming their dissertation committees by the end of May, following spring semester 5. The dissertation chair and dissertation committee determine progress towards degree for this stage of the program. Students who are not progressing towards degree obtainment as expected risk dismissal from their GRA or the program.

Students who are having difficulty with the program model should meet with the program director.

Publication, Conference Abstract, and Grant Aspirational Goals

Publication and Conference Abstracts

Before the start of the second year, students should aim to have authored or co-authored at least **one article** submitted to a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal and/or one abstract submitted for presentation at a relevant 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 two articles** submitted to peer-reviewed, scholarly journals and two abstracts submitted for presentation at a relevant conference.

Before the start of year four, students should aim to have authored or co-authored **at least three articles** submitted to scholarly journals and three abstracts submitted for relevant conference presentations.

Grant Applications

Students are welcome and encouraged to identify and apply for grants appropriate to their research area and their program phase, but grant-writing is not required. Students should, however, collaborate with their GRA supervisor, chair, or other faculty members on grant writing when appropriate. All students seeking to apply for a grant must have a faculty sponsor for all grant applications. Students cannot lead a grant application during their first year in the program and until coursework and CITI training has been completed. Students should secure a faculty sponsor and engage in adequate planning prior to submitting internal or external grant applications.

STUDENT PHD COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND PROCEDURES

Students are responsible for choosing their committee chair and members. Students are expected to choose their chair and finalize their committee by the end of May following the spring semester when they complete coursework. Students who wish to begin working on their comprehensive exam during the final semester of coursework should form their committees by the end of winter break, prior to the start of their final semester in coursework.

The University of Tennessee Graduate School has established the following rules for [PhD committee membership](#):

- The committee must have at least **four** members.
- Committee chairs should be from within the College.
- Committees should have **three** members within the College
- One member should be from **outside the College but internal to the University** (within a different college).
- At least **two** committee members must be **UT tenured or tenure-track faculty** members
- At least **one** committee member must be from **outside of the College of Social Work**. This external member is usually from another College internal to the University of Tennessee (UTK).
- In **special circumstances**, such as when a student is seeking specific expertise not housed within the University, an external committee member can come from outside of UTK. Committee members external to UTK must be approved by the PhD program director and the Graduate School. Students wishing to seek approval for an external committee member outside of UTK should submit the person's CV and a short paragraph justifying the choice to the PhD program director, via email and copy the program assistant, for consideration. Committee members external to UTK are considered individually, and approval is not guaranteed. Committee members external to UTK are expected to hold credentials and have accomplishments that are commensurate with those of a tenured, tenure-track, or accomplished research-oriented faculty member here at UTK.
- UT tenured or tenure-track faculty without a doctoral degree and/or other experts in the field may serve on PhD committees if they have substantial research accomplishments, with PhD program director approval. Students seeking to add a committee member who does not have a PhD or doctoral degree should consult with the PhD program director.
- Emeritus faculty can serve on committees on which they are serving only 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 only at the time of retirement.
- Assistant level, tenure track faculty members can serve as committee co-chairs. Those with prior experience chairing committees can serve as a chair with approval from the PhD program director.

All tenured and tenure-track College of Social Work faculty are approved by the University and the College of Social Work to chair or co-chair committees. This includes all College administrators who are also tenured faculty (i.e. Dean, Associate Deans, and program directors).

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

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

Upon satisfactory completion of all components (completion of literature review paper, defense of comprehensive exam/literature review paper, and dissertation proposal defense) of the comprehensive examination, the committee chair will email the PhD program director, copying the program assistant and student, verifying successful completion of the comprehensive exam.

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 defenses. The defense can be completed in person, or via a virtual video conference platform, as agreed upon by the student and their committee.

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 a professional presentation of 1) a scholarly comprehensive literature review paper, and 2) the dissertation proposal. The paper and proposal must be approved by the student’s PhD committee. The presentation is a defense of the comprehensive exam and a defense of the dissertation proposal. The content, organization, and length of the presentation should be consistent with professional presentations made at major social work conferences. The student’s committee chair can advise the student about additional expectations for length, content, and other components. The comprehensive examination typically occurs after the student has completed the required coursework, although students can choose to begin preparing the content for the comprehensive examination before coursework is fully completed.

Failure of the comprehensive exam: If a student fails the comprehensive exam defense, another defense can be rescheduled, in consultation with the student’s committee and the PhD program director, once the committee agrees that the necessary changes have been made and the student is ready to proceed with another defense.

Scholarly Literature Review Paper (part 1 of the comprehensive exam defense)

The comprehensive exam is a comprehensive literature review paper combined with the dissertation proposal. The exam/paper is a publishable, comprehensive scholarly literature review, formatted like a peer-reviewed journal article, related to the student’s dissertation topic. Examples of scholarly, comprehensive literature reviews include a systematic review, scoping review, and/or meta-analysis, among others. Students must plan their comprehensive exam strategy with their chair and committee, then defend their exam findings to their committee and provide the committee with a proposal for the dissertation research during a formal defense presentation. Once the student passes the comprehensive exam defense the comprehensive exam paper should be edited into the first paper of the student’s three- paper dissertation. The purpose of the comprehensive exam paper is to demonstrate:

- the student’s thorough knowledge of the relevant literature and existing research evidence,
- 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 comprehensive exam/literature review paper should conform to the current issue of the APA-style manual.

The comprehensive exam/literature review should relate logically to the dissertation proposal in these areas: statement of the problem, hypotheses, definition and operationalization of variables, methodology and data analysis that will be conducted for the dissertation study. The exam 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 comprehensive exam/paper is to provide a sound methodological critique of the identified studies in the exam/paper, including a discussion of the status of the current state of the science in the substantive area, and a summary of identified gaps in the literature. An equally important function is to provide a theoretical explanation of the relationships among the variables of interest, and a discussion of the absence of relationships with other important variables. It is essential that the exam/paper explain what mechanisms link the variables. The exam/paper can also provide descriptive information about similar programs or target populations. The exam/paper should cover material directly related to the problem being studied and relevant theories, models, or frameworks related to these problem areas.

In agreement with the student's PhD committee chair, a defensible draft of the exam/paper should be distributed to committee members for consideration and feedback at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam/proposal defense date. All comments and feedback from committee members should be directed to the student, who should then discuss how to address the feedback with the committee chair. The committee chair has the final decision-making authority in cases where committee members may disagree about revisions to the exam/paper.

Dissertation Proposal (part 2 of the comprehensive examination defense)

The purpose of the dissertation proposal is to demonstrate that the student has completed the conceptual work and developed the methodological knowledge and skills necessary to begin work on the dissertation. The dissertation proposal is part of the overall comprehensive exam defense. The proposal includes a statement of the research problem or research question(s), including hypotheses if appropriate, an explication of the proposed methodology, a discussion of the proposed data analysis, and a realistic timetable for the completion of papers 2 and 3 of the three-paper dissertation.

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 dissertation 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 people 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 an intervention program.

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 importantly, how they will be measured.

d. Data Analysis

This section will explain how the data will be analyzed once it is 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.

DISSERTATION

Overview of Procedural Requirements

The relevant [Graduate School](#) requirements and deadlines are nonnegotiable. The Graduate School seldom makes exceptions to their required [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. The student's PhD committee must be formed and approved (see above) prior to scheduling a defense.

1. After successfully completing the comprehensive exam, students must submit the admission to candidacy form to the Graduate School. This form verifies that the comprehensive exam and the dissertation proposal have been defended and passed.

Students cannot move into the candidacy phase until this form has been approved by the Graduate School.

2. The dissertation itself is completed under the guidance of the committee.
3. The College and University require **IRB approval** of dissertation research **prior to any data collection**.
4. When the committee has determined that a dissertation draft is ready for defense, the student should consult with their committee members and the program assistant to schedule the oral defense and either reserve a room for the defense or generate a virtual meeting link for the defense. Students are expected to provide a draft of the dissertation to their committee for review at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date, to give the committee time to review and provide feedback. The student should be sure that the scheduled time is within the deadline set by the Graduate School. Students should collaborate with the program 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 dissertation will then be defended by making a professional presentation to the student's dissertation committee.
Note: Two forms must be signed by committee members after the completion of the defense. Committees typically sign the form electronically using Adobe. These forms are the [Report of Final Examination/Dissertation Defense/Project/Capstone \(Pass/Fail\)](#) form and the [Thesis/Dissertation Approval](#) form. After the defense/final exam, the committee will provide the signatures on both forms, indicating that the defense has been passed. Students will be responsible for getting signed forms to the Graduate School by the deadlines. These forms may be signed at the time of the oral defense if the committee has no further recommendations. The instructions for preparing the final document, its content and format, are specific. The student should be familiar with these instructions before beginning work on the dissertation (see below).

Note: If a student fails a defense, the defense can be rescheduled once the committee, in consultation with the student, approves the defense to be rescheduled.
6. **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 (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 required Approval Sheet and on the copies of the final version of the dissertation that need to be submitted to the University can be found [here](#). All copies of the dissertation submitted to the University are electronic.

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. The final copy of the dissertation must be submitted to TRACE by the deadline on the Graduate School calendar.

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.

- A. The [form](#) should be completed by the student, with assistance from the program assistant. **The student should be sure to obtain a current copy of their transcript to aid in listing coursework on required forms.**
- B. The Admission to Candidacy form **must be submitted to the program assistant who works with the program director to review the form for verification of coursework before** it is submitted to the Graduate School.
- C. 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.**
- D. The student must complete the steps needed to be admitted to candidacy at least one full semester before graduation.

Dissertation and Oral Defense

- A. The dissertation should be comprised of three scholarly papers plus an introduction and concluding chapter 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 the comprehensive exam paper/literature review of existing research on the substantive topic that has been edited to serve as the first paper of the dissertation. Papers two and three of the dissertation should each focus on an appropriate analysis that answers specific research questions that fill an identified gap in the literature that is discussed in paper one. The overall dissertation should also have a comprehensive introduction that explains how the three papers are related, and a conclusion that wraps up the findings for the committee.
- B. The introductory 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 original 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 comprehensive exam/literature review paper, the student is expected to complete a comprehensive, formal, scholarly synthesis of the research literature in their topic area that follows the guidelines of the [PRISMA statement](#), as applicable to the type of synthesis of evidence (i.e. systematic review, scoping review) that the student is conducting. Students should consult with their dissertation chairs and committees to develop a plan for the comprehensive exam that aligns with the expectations of their specific dissertation committees.
- E. All papers must be suitable for publication in a refereed journal before the dissertation defense with the student as sole or first author.
- F. Students should not publish dissertation findings until after a successful defense. If a student pursues publication of any of the three papers after a successful defense but prior to submission of the finalized 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.
- G. Students are expected to seek agreement from all committee members about expectations for authorship on papers published from their dissertation work. General guidelines are that each committee member should be featured as an author on papers from the dissertation unless the committee member has stated a preference for not being included on the student's dissertation publications. Students should discuss authorship with committee members at the outset of the dissertation process. Students can also consult the *APA Manual* to learn more about guidelines for authorship in relation to peer reviewed publications.

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, where the student defends the results of the dissertation research to the dissertation committee and answers questions about the dissertation posed by the committee and other attendees. Dissertation defenses are open to the general college and university communities and will be scheduled and viewable on the college calendar. The student is responsible for giving an oral presentation of their full dissertation, which includes the introduction, papers 1, 2, and 3, and the conclusion. 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 drawn from the dissertation research. The student should identify areas for future research and articulate a personal research agenda that builds upon the dissertation. The student should also address and discuss feedback they may have received from their committee 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.

Length of dissertation defense: The amount of time it takes for the student to fully explain their research findings in their dissertation defense is up to the discretion of the student's dissertation chair and committee. Dissertation defenses typically run from 1-2 hours, so blocking off two hours of time for the defense is recommended. The defense should be long enough to allow the student time to demonstrate competence with the study and findings, while also allowing students to communicate research within a reasonable time limit. For a dissertation defense to be successful, students should demonstrate expertise in the summary of the literature that includes a summary of findings within the literature and identified gaps in the literature followed by a presentation of subsequent research questions with an adequate analysis that answers the questions and fills an identified gap in the literature.

Students should inform the program assistant when the defense is scheduled at least two weeks prior so it can be added to the college calendar. The defense can take place in-person, or using a virtual conference platform, and it is open to the general college and university community. All members of the dissertation committee will need to be present for the oral defense presentation either in person or virtually. Non-committee members (family, friends, students, other faculty, staff) are allowed to attend. After the presentation concludes, non-committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions and participate in a discussion about the student's presentation and dissertation topic. After this, non-committee members will be asked to leave so the dissertation committee members may question the student. Non-committee members who are attending virtually must log completely out of the meeting (they cannot just be moved to virtual meeting "rooms") to protect confidentiality. After answering the committee's questions, the student will then be dismissed so the committee can convene a confidential discussion and vote concerning the outcome of the dissertation defense. Students attending virtually must log completely out of the virtual platform during the committee's deliberation. Once the deliberation ends, the student will be invited back into the room or be informed that it is time to log back into the virtual platform to be provided with the results of the committee's 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

The student should contact the consultant early in the dissertation writing process to ensure the dissertation is written 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, all graduating PhD students must 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](#)

[Getting Approval](#)

[Submission](#)

[Steps to Graduation](#)

[Graduation Deadlines](#)

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

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 must have the following abilities and attributes 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](#).

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.

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

College of Social Work's (CSW's) Academic and Professional Standards Committee

Procedures for addressing problems with student conduct or academic performance.

Except for alleged academic dishonesty, which shall be addressed through the procedures set forth in Hilltopics, the following procedures are used to address student academic, behavioral and or professional standards concerns that have not been resolved through other student support procedures in the College. Examples include unsatisfactory progress in courses and field placement, consistent issues with professional behaviors (i.e., poor attendance, tardiness, missing/late assignments), not adhering to the core values described in the NASW Code of Ethics.

Procedures

1. A Professional Standards Committee will be constituted each year. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA) will select a faculty chairperson and 3 committee members including the student success representative, a field faculty member, and one full-time faculty to serve on this committee. The term of office for faculty members is one year and can be renewed. The Professional Standards Committee meets as needed. Faculty members of the Professional Standards Committee having direct prior involvement with a case shall recuse themselves. In such a circumstance, the ADAA will appoint an

alternative faculty for consideration of that case.

2. The student shall be given written notice (e-mail is sufficient) of the time and place of the committee hearing at least 7 business days before the hearing.
3. The faculty member's prior written documentation of the student's conduct and any proposed support plan(s) will be submitted along with any other relevant 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 everyone participating in the hearing.
4. 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 their position, ask questions, and respond to questions. However, a hearing of the Committee is not a legal proceeding and legal representation of the parties is not permitted in the hearing.
5. The Committee will deliberate in private and make a decision on the appropriate of action, which may include, but not be limited to: no action against a student; placement of a student on probationary status; determination that the student is eligible for re-placement (in instances related to teaching practicum); putting the student on a leave of absence; or dismissing the student from the CSW. (The committee will have a "possible options" decision rubric for guidance). After a decision is reached, the committee will send documentation to the student, program director, faculty, and advisor within 3 business days.
6. A student may appeal the decision of the committee by sending a written appeal to the ADAA within 7 business days of receiving written documentation, who then shall make a decision on the student's appeal and communicate that decision to the student, in writing, with copies to the appropriate program director.
7. A student may appeal a decision of the ADAA to the College of Social Work's Dean (the Dean), by sending a written appeal to the Dean within 7 business days of receiving the ADAA's decision about the appeal, who then shall make a decision on the student's appeal request and communicate that decision to the student in writing with copies to the ADAA.
8. To appeal the decision of the Dean, 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 in accordance with the above outlined procedures.

A complete statement of the Graduate Council Appeal Procedure is available from the UT-Knoxville Graduate School, <http://gradschool.utk.edu>.

APPENDIX B: REQUIREMENTS FOR GRA SUPERVISION

PhD students who receive graduate research assistantships (GRA) are paired with one or two faculty member supervisors to work 20 hours per week on research activities. GRAs receive a stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance in exchange for working these hours. Faculty members matched with a

GRA are called GRA supervisors.

GRA supervisors are expected to follow these guidelines:

1. Faculty who wishes to request a GRA for an upcoming academic year should respond to the **GRA matching request form** that will be sent out by the PhD program in the spring semester prior to new GRA matches that begin in fall semester. This applies to faculty requesting new GRA matches and faculty who wish to continue their match with their current student. **Faculty must fill out the form annually to receive a GRA match.** GRA matches run from August 1 to July 31.
2. GRA matches are dependent on College needs, including the need for GRA support for grant funding, cannot be guaranteed, and may be subject to change.
3. GRA supervisors and GRA students should use [The Mentorship Guide](#) mentoring handbook to guide the assistantship. The PhD program provides this book for mentors and mentees, and copies can be requested from the PhD program assistant.
4. Per guidance from the Dean, the College will sponsor one 10-hour GRA match for a faculty member who requests a GRA. Faculty who have funding to support additional GRA hours should indicate this on their GRA matching form.
5. Faculty matched with a GRA are expected to provide a professional, structured experience designed to socialize the GRA into academia and scholarly productivity. As such, the following is expected from faculty supervising GRAs:
 - a. Introductory meeting at the beginning of the fall semester to set a meeting schedule and assistantship goals.
 - b. Regular, real-time meetings between the GRA and the GRA supervisor either in-person, via video conference, or via phone conference.
 - c. Clear and consistent communication with the student, including timely responses to student inquiries.
 - d. Provision of critical feedback designed to help the student with opportunities for growth.
 - e. Planning of activities to support the supervisor's research goals.
 - f. Planning of activities to support the student's research goals.
 - g. Completion of the GRA feedback forms at the end of fall and spring semester- a meeting to discuss this feedback should also occur.
 - h. Provision of a professional relationship free from harassment.
6. Faculty matched with a GRA are expected to give students exposure to meaningful research activities. PhD GRAs need exposure to sophisticated research activities above what might be expected of a master's or undergraduate research assistant. As such, students should expect to participate in some or all of the following:
 - a. Preparation and authorship in peer-reviewed publications.
 - b. Preparation and authorship in conference abstract submissions and conference presentations.
 - c. Involvement in grant writing and submission.
 - d. Involvement in research activity, such as IRB preparation and submission, data

- collection, and/or data analysis.
 - e. Involvement in supporting the faculty member's execution of their research projects.
 - f. Advisement from the GRA supervisor about advancing the student's research agenda.
7. Faculty who are unable to adhere to these guidelines or who become unable to continue to adhere to these guidelines should contact the PhD program director to request that the GRA be re-matched.
 8. Faculty members who agree to serve as GRA supervisors are agreeing to abide by these guidelines.

APPENDIX C: GUIDANCE FOR TEACHING PRACTICUM

Students are required to complete one or more teaching practicum experiences prior to being allowed to teach independently for the College. The teaching practicum is intended as a learning experience, similar to field education at the master of social work level, for the PhD level teaching practicum student, and it is not a teaching assistant position. PhD teaching practicum students should not be expected to take over primary class instruction. As such, faculty agreeing to serve as teaching practicum supervisors are also agreeing to closely supervise the PhD teaching practicum student and provide students with feedback and direction to learn how to teach independently. Students completing the teaching practicum agree to use feedback from the practicum supervisor to improve their teaching practices so they can be prepared for independent teaching in the future.

Expectations for Teaching Practicum Experiences:

1. Students must be supervised by a full-time tenured or tenure track faculty member or a full-time practice (clinical) faculty member. Teaching practicum students cannot be supervised by adjunct faculty members or faculty members with full time appointments outside the College of Social Work.
2. PhD students can do a practicum for any class in any CSW program (BSSW, MSSW, DSW, PhD). PhD students can do a practicum for a PhD level class if they have already completed the class successfully.
3. PhD teaching practicum students are expected to attend all class meetings to observe and/or participate in class instruction.
4. Faculty members should involve teaching practicum students in meaningful teaching activities, that can include the following:
 - a. Design and administration of independent lectures with faculty supervision
 - b. Input on grading with faculty supervision
 - c. Design of assignments and class activities with faculty supervision
 - d. Design of grading rubrics with faculty supervision
 - e. Design of course syllabus
 - f. Hosting classes with faculty supervision
 - g. Addressing student concerns and behavioral issues with faculty supervision
 - h. Answering student questions and problem-solving student issues with faculty supervision

- i. Application of teaching theory and pedagogy to course design and instruction
5. Faculty members who supervise teaching practicum students should plan to meet with their classes regularly and closely supervise the teaching activities of teaching practicum students.
6. Faculty members who supervise teaching practicum students should meet individually with the PhD teaching practicum students to process teaching experiences regularly.
7. Faculty supervisors should involve students in the planning and teaching of the class and explain to students their reasoning behind their teaching strategies and help practicum students process their experiences.
8. Faculty members should not expect teaching practicum students to teach independently, although practicum students can occasionally cover classes if the student is comfortable doing so, and with close faculty guidance.
9. Faculty members should not expect PhD teaching practicum students to do independent grading or handle student concerns/questions independently without guidance.
10. Faculty members who agree to supervise PhD teaching practicum students are agreeing to abide by these guidelines.

OPIc Exam Requirements:

<https://gradschool.utk.edu/future-students/office-of-graduate-admissions/ita-testing-program/>

ITA Testing Program

The ITA Testing Program establishes the oral proficiency for teaching assistants and is located administratively in the Graduate School. All prospective teaching assistants or associates whose native language is not English are required to take and pass the OPIc before they can assume teaching responsibilities. This applies to all persons regardless of citizenship status, previous educational experience, or scores on other tests.

History and Overview

The ITA Testing Program (formerly the SPEAK® Testing Program) was instituted at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 1983 as a response to a mandate from the Tennessee General Assembly requiring that all instructional personnel be proficient in spoken English. The program based the required levels of oral proficiency upon the ILR/ETS/ACTFL rating scale. The SPEAK® Test, created by ETS, has been retired, and the testing program now uses the [ACTFL OPIc](#).

Registration

Students will be registered for the test by their departments. There is no need for you to register yourself. The OPIc is free of charge the first two times you take the test. Starting with the third test, your department will be charged \$80 per test (\$105 if the test is offered via remote proctoring). Please contact [Jen Scagnelli](#) regarding registering for the test as she is the CSW contact.

All participants are required to [practice the OPIc test](#) before taking the exam.

First-year students who need to take the exam will do so in spring of their first year.

The OPIc test scores range from Novice Low (lowest) to Superior (highest). There are three passing categories and one non-passing category of the OPIc scores. Students who score below an Advanced High (AH) must test every year until they score an AH. If you score an AH or above (unconditional), you have satisfied the requirements of the ITA

Testing Program and do not need to retest.

Unconditionally Approved for Classroom Teaching

Advanced High (AH) or Superior - This score means that the department may assign the TA any instructional duties it chooses. Departments are not required to assign teaching duties to persons in this range, but may do so as their needs require.

Conditionally Approved for Classroom Teaching

Advanced Mid (AM) - This score means that the department may assign the TA any instructional duties it chooses, but that the TA's approval for teaching is probationary. Conditionally approved TAs need to make an appointment with the [ITA Testing Program coordinator](#) early in the semester to review how they can best improve their spoken English. Also, conditionally approved TAs will be observed by a member of their department and a faculty member from another department to establish that they are successful in the performance of their teaching duties. These faculty members will then determine if the TAs can continue teaching or need to improve before resuming teaching duties for that semester. Students need to retest yearly until they score an Advanced High or Superior. Students who fail to retest will not be allowed to teach in that semester.

Approved for Limited Assistance Roles

Advanced Low (AL) - This score means that the department may assign the TA duties involving one-on-one contact in an instructional role. This may include assisting in a laboratory, tutoring individuals, grading papers and discussing them with individuals, or other roles of a similar nature.

Not Approved for Instructional Duties

IH (Intermediate High) or lower - This score means that the TA's English is not adequate for instructional roles.

If you have questions about registration, please contact Millie Cheatham at 865-974-0818 or mcheatha@utk.edu.

APPENDIX D: TRAVEL PROCEDURES

The College of Social Work currently has budgeted travel funds for each academic year for all students to support annual conference travel to one professional conference. Annual student travel allotments vary based on the program budget. Students, except those in the first year of the program, are expected to be presenting if they use the travel funds. Student travel fund allotments should fully cover attendance at one professional conference annually. **Students must use their own funds to travel to additional conferences once their travel allotment has been spent.** Students are encouraged to budget their travel allotment wisely.

All students are expected to apply for the [Graduate Student Senate \(GSS\) travel awards](#) to supplement travel for each trip (these funds, if provided, will help students extend the leverage of their allotted program level travel funds).

The program assistant will work with students to seek approval from the PhD program director before processing travel requests.

Occasionally, travel support for additional conferences can be requested from the program. Support for additional conference attendance (any conference after the first one) can be requested from the program, but this support would be allocated based on the status of the program budget and prioritized based on the professional benefits that the additional conference would provide to the student. Additional requests should be made via email directly to the PhD program assistant, copying the program director. Approval of additional travel requests is not guaranteed.

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. Availability of travel funds for students will depend on budgetary decisions of the College and University. The program assistant can provide information and answer questions about travel support.

Procedural Steps

Step 1. Submit a travel request at least 1 month before your travel. (Students who do not follow this requirement risk not having the cost of travel covered by the program).

Before any travel on University business, please contact the program assistant one month in advance of the requested travel date. 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. What is your role at the conference? Presenter? Attendee?
2. Do you have any travel awards for the conference?
3. Conference Name
4. Dates of Conference
5. Location of Conference
6. Your expected departure date and time
7. Your expected return date and time
8. Amount of Conference Registration
9. Amount of Hotel Lodging
10. Type of Transportation Needed

Step 2. Set the program assistant as a delegate in DASH.

Step 3. Only once travel has been authorized, register for conference, book hotel conference, and arrange airfare.

Step 4. Submit itemized receipts to the program assistant as soon as you return.

1. All receipts must be in your name and show the following: your name, vendor name, date, itemized charges, and method of payment.

2. Only the person who paid for the expense will be reimbursed. For example, if you share a room with someone, then the person who paid for the lodging will be reimbursed. This applies to ride shares as well.
3. As a standard for travel, we reimburse the per diem rate for meals based on the zip code where the travel occurred. However, if any meals were provided during the conference, then the per diem is reduced for that meal. [Here](#) is the link to look up the per diem rate based on the zipcode.
4. Do not book travel packages or bundles. Many of the travel packages and bundles have unallowable expenses which must be deducted from the package. So, it is safest to NOT use packages or bundles. Watch for “hidden” bundle offers especially with airfare.
5. 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.
6. Send the following information in **ONE email with ALL receipts attached** to the email after you attend the conference. This will help not miss any of your expenses. All receipts must be in your name and show the following: your name, vendor name, date, itemized charges, and method of payment.
 - a. Schedule of Conference (attach as pdf)
 - b. Conference Room Rate (attach as pdf) – Most conferences have an agreement with a hotel (and/or overflow hotels) for a group rate. However, you must submit this information from the conference website as proof of the rate. Collect this information from the website prior to attending the conference (it is often not viewable once the conference is over). This is particularly important if the group rate is higher than the Conus rate. See note below.
 - c. Registration Receipt (attach as pdf) – this receipt must show your name, date, conference and method of payment.
 - d. Lodging Receipt (attach as pdf) – this receipt must be itemized for specific charges such as taxes, parking, fees, etc. Make sure you reserve your room with the conference room block to ensure you are only paying for the approved conference room rate. UT will not reimburse any amount over the conference room rate. If the conference does not have a conference hotel, then you will need to book lodging using the [approved rates](#) for the zip code. (If your lodging is over the amount allowed, then you will have to pay for that amount out-of-pocket).
 - e. Airfare Receipt (attach as pdf) – this receipt must be in your name only (if someone else is traveling with you, then please pay for airfare separately). The only type of airfare to be reimbursed is economy, non-refundable tickets.

- f. Car Rental/Transportation Receipts (attach as pdf) – this receipt must be itemized for specific charges such as taxes, fuel costs, etc.
 - g. 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.
 - h. Per diem rate for Meals – Please indicate if there were any meals provided at the conference.
7. In the **body of the email** indicate the following:
 - a. First day of travel: Trip DEPARTURE time and date, Trip ARRIVAL time and date
 - b. Last day of travel: Trip DEPARTURE time and date, Trip ARRIVAL time and date
8. Once travel is completed, receipts need to be submitted as soon as possible within 30 days at the latest. This timeline is in place to allow the College to process all graduate student travel within the University time limits.

UTK Travel Policy. Review the [travel policy](#) in advance.

Other Travel Notes

- Students can often volunteer at conferences in exchange for a reduced or complimentary registration. Students are encouraged to check into this option for each conference.
- 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.
- 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>
- International travel requires additional approvals and registration with [the Center for Global Engagement](#). Please seek assistance from the program assistant 8 weeks prior to international travel.

Note: Upon registering for CSWE, students will receive an email requesting verification of their

student status. Please forward the email to the 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.

APPENDIX E: FORMS

Completion of required forms at each step of the student's progress through the PhD program is the student's responsibility.

[CSW PhD Forms](#)

[Graduate School's Forms Central](#)

APPENDIX F: WEB RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Student Resources

- [College of Social Work](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Graduation Deadlines](#)
- [Graduate School Forms](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Student obligations and appeals process](#)
- [Graduate Student Senate](#)
- [Office of Graduate Admissions](#)
- [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#)
- [Office of Access and Engagement](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct, Relationship Violence, and Stalking](#)
- [Office of Multicultural Student Life](#)
- [Office of Research Integrity](#)
 - [Institutional Review Board](#)
- [Thesis/Dissertation Consultant](#)
- [Office of Information Technology](#)

Professional Development and Training

- [Office of Graduate Training and Mentoring](#)

- [Best Practices in Teaching Program](#)
- [UT Libraries Information for Graduate Students](#)
- [Center for Career Development](#)
- [Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center](#)
 - UT CIRTl: [Center for Integration of Research and Teaching](#)
- [Experience Learning](#)

Funding

- [Costs and funding opportunities](#)
- [Graduate Student Senate Travel Awards](#)
- [Financial Aid and Scholarships](#)

International Students

- [Center for International Education](#)
- [International House](#)
- [ITA Testing Program](#)