

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

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The goal of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare doctoral program is to prepare students to become leaders nationally and internationally in advancing social work practice and policy through research, teaching, and scholarship. Our students graduate from the program with the critical knowledge and skills they need to become innovative stewards of the discipline who generate and disseminate knowledge as researchers, scholars and educators. The school is known nationally and internationally as a prime innovator in the Strengths Perspective for social work practice. Doctoral students have played a key role in advancing this work to its 21st century applications.

Program Highlights

- Creative, critical thinking about social work practice, social policy, and guiding theoretical frames
- Advanced quantitative and qualitative research skills
- Opportunities for innovative scholarship and for the development of teaching skills
- Student-centered educational approach
- Financial support and mentoring for students
- Appreciation for human diversity and the development of a global perspective
- Racial, social, economic, and environmental justice focus
- Study Abroad opportunities

Doctoral students are immersed in the excitement and creativity in the profession — how professionals come to know what they know, how they put that knowledge into practice and how it affects social justice.

Consider Our Program

The Ph.D. program (<https://socwel.ku.edu/phd/>) (<http://socwel.ku.edu/academics/degrees/phd/overview/>) offers effective options for building knowledge by initiating systematic inquiry into methods, forms, and outcomes of social work practice and social welfare policy. We are dedicated to educating scholars who desire to build knowledge for the profession through quantitative, qualitative, theoretical, or conceptual analyses, and historiographic investigations. Demand for our Ph.D. graduates is high. Our alumni are engaged in teaching, research, and administrative endeavors and are found in faculty positions at premier research universities and at smaller colleges and universities throughout the United States and abroad.

Curriculum

Doctoral courses prepare students as scholars with conceptual and methodological sophistication.

- The history and philosophy course focuses on the intellectual history, current status, and innovation of social work ideas, ideologies, and theories.
- In the research sequence, students learn both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, designs, advanced modes of analysis, theory for research, and appropriate applications.

- The policy/practice courses provide the opportunity to analyze policies of interest to the student and discover “best” practices as they affect specific populations. Students develop and apply a critical perspective when considering human problems, strengths, and strategies for change and transformation.
- Qualifying papers and electives help students develop deep understanding in areas of special interest.
- A required course as well as teaching seminars for GTAs prepare students to be effective educators.
- The dissertation involves advanced and focused research into a topic selected by the student, based on quantitative, qualitative, historical, or other methods of inquiry.

GTA & GRA - Teaching and Research Opportunities

Our Ph.D. program contributes significantly to the model of strengths and community-based research, service, and education developed by the School. Under the direction of faculty members, many Ph.D. students work on research projects and serve as teaching assistants. For example, doctoral research assistants work in such areas as aging, asset-building, child welfare, criminal justice, diversity issues, domestic violence, health and disability, child and adult mental health, poverty, social policy, and spirituality.

It is part of the School's mission to focus on teaching, inquiry, and practice that benefit populations who have been oppressed by our systems and institutions. The School is committed to diversity, inclusion, and multicultural perspectives. Many of the faculty are involved in research and service projects which aim to achieve direct and positive impacts on Black, Indigenous and people of color as well as other oppressed groups. Doctoral students work with faculty to bring these projects to life.

Admission Criteria & Requirements

Criteria used in judging applications include the applicant's potential for excellence in academic performance, professional practice experience, and potential for contributions to knowledge-building for social work.

Required

- Master's degree in social work or related field.
- Graduate grade-point average of 3.5 or higher.
- Personal statement of scholarly and research interests in social work practice.
- Three letters of reference.
- Completion of a basic statistics course within the past two years with a grade of B or higher. The applicant must include a written statement showing how this requirement has been met or how it will be met before entering the program, or indicate they plan to apply for a waiver of this requirement based on extensive research experience.
- Completion of the online graduate application (<https://graduate.ku.edu/application-process/>).
- Students whose native language is not English must follow the policy for English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study. (<http://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/english-proficiency-international-students/?num1.5>)

Preferred

- Undergraduate grade-point average of 3.0 or higher preferred.
- MSW degree preferred. Applicants with master's degrees related to social work and affiliation with social work activities and values are considered.
- Two years of social work or related practice; two years of post-master's professional social work experience preferred.

Application Timeline and Procedure

Ph.D. admissions are considered every other year. The deadline to apply is **January 15, 2023**, for the Fall 2023 term. Applications are not reviewed until all materials are received. Late applications are considered only on a space-available basis.

Learn more about the admission process (<https://socwel.ku.edu/phd-apply/>).

International Students

International students from all regions of the world are encouraged to apply. For more information about international student applications and resources and regulations contact International Support Services (<http://www.iss.ku.edu/>) and the Applied English Center (<https://aec.ku.edu/>).

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

The program requires a minimum of 64 credit hours, as follows:

- 37 credit hours of required coursework.
- 9 credit hours of electives.
- A qualifying paper.
- A comprehensive examination process.
- Completion of a dissertation.

In fulfilling the elective hours, students may take graduate-level courses in any substantive area or research skills necessary for successful completion of their goals. Students can take electives in social science or other relevant graduate disciplines. They may also complete Independent Study under faculty direction and/or choose from one of the study abroad courses offered by the School.

Beyond course work, students complete one qualifying paper under the guidance of a faculty committee. This demonstrates their ability to integrate knowledge and skills across the curriculum areas in relation to a theme of inquiry developed by the student in their chosen specialization. After the qualifying paper is completed, students complete an oral comprehensive exam (dissertation proposal defense) and then undertake and complete an approved research project, and write and defend the doctoral dissertation.

Required course work (<https://socwel.ku.edu/phd-curriculum/>) can be completed in 2 years. Additional time is needed to complete the qualifying papers and dissertation. The program can be completed in 4 years of focused work. Students may start on a part-time basis but eventually must spend 1 year in residence, which entails 2 semesters of full-time course work (9 hours) and may include one summer session (6 hours); or a combination of 6 hours of course work and half-time appointment as a teaching or research assistant for 2 semesters.

| Code | Title | Hours |
|-------------------------|---|-------|
| Doctoral Courses | | |
| SW 911 | PhD Seminar I | 1 |
| SW 912 | PhD Seminar II | 1 |
| SW 975 | Racial Equity and Social Justice in Research and Practice | 3 |
| SW 976 | Practice and Politics of Writing | 3 |
| SW 978 | Research Design and Methods | 3 |
| SW 979 | Methods of Qualitative Inquiry I | 3 |
| SW 980 | History and Philosophy of Social Work | 3 |
| SW 981 | Advanced Quantitative Research Methods I | 3 |
| SW 982 | Social Welfare Policy | 3 |
| SW 983 | Advanced Quantitative Research Methods II | 3 |
| SW 984 | Social Work Practice: Identifying and Improving "Best Practices" (elective) | 3 |
| SW 985 | Theory for Social Work Research | 3 |
| SW 987 | Teaching Social Work: Philosophy and Methods | 3 |
| SW 988 | Mixed Methods in Social Science Research (optional elective) | 3 |
| SW 989 | Methods of Qualitative Inquiry II | 3 |
| SW 999 | Dissertation | 1-12 |