

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

School of Social Work

Doctor of Social Work (DSW)

Student Handbook

2025-2026

(Revised May 15, 2025)



DSW Student Handbook

From the School of Social Work

Dear Incoming DSW Students,

On behalf of the faculty and staff in the School of Social Work at the University of Memphis, I would like to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to you as you embark on this exciting and transformative journey toward your doctoral degree. We are thrilled that you have chosen to join our program, and we are eager to support you every step of the way as you develop the knowledge, skills, and leadership abilities that will shape the future of social work practice, research, and policy.

As a doctoral student, you will be part of a vibrant and supportive academic community. Our program is designed to challenge and inspire you, while also providing the resources and mentorship necessary for success. Throughout your studies, you will have opportunities to engage in rigorous research, work alongside distinguished faculty, and collaborate with fellow students who share your commitment to social justice and improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

In our program, we place a strong emphasis on fostering critical thinking, ethical practice, and a deep understanding of the complexities of social issues. Whether your focus is in direct practice, policy advocacy, or research, our curriculum will help you develop the tools to make meaningful and lasting contributions to the social work profession and beyond. Our goal is to prepare practitioner-scholars who can generate new social work knowledge and respond to increasingly complex practice environments. The DSW program learning outcomes are to develop leaders in social work education by: preparing students with cutting-edge social work skills necessary to practice in complex settings; creating knowledge through research and engaged scholarship; reducing poverty, inequality, and social and economic injustice through evidence-based practices; and addressing the needs of the Mid-South within a global perspective. We are excited to have you in our program to help us make this mission a reality!

We understand that pursuing a doctoral degree can be both exciting and challenging, and we are confident that with your dedication, passion, and perseverance, you will achieve

great things. We are excited to see the unique perspectives, research ideas, and experiences you will bring to our program, and we look forward to working with you over the course of your studies.

Once again, welcome to the University of Memphis Social Work Doctoral Program. We are excited about the journey ahead and are confident that your time here will be both enriching and impactful. If you have any questions or need assistance before the start of the semester, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

We wish you all the best as you prepare to begin this next chapter of your academic and professional life.

Warm regards,

Susan Elswick EdD LCSW LSSW RPT-S IMH-E



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THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS MISSION

The University of Memphis is a learner-centered metropolitan research university providing high quality educational experiences while pursuing new knowledge through research, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary and engaged scholarship. A doctoral degree-granting urban research university, The University of Memphis is committed to excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional education; in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge; in service to the metropolitan community, the state, and the nation; and in preparation of a diverse student population for successful careers and meaningful participation in a global society. The University of Memphis remains committed to the education of a non-racially identifiable student body and promotes diversity and access without regard to race, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MISSION

The School of Social Work at the University of Memphis is part of the College of Arts and Sciences. The College of Arts and Sciences is the largest college in the University of Memphis, comprising 24 academic units, the ROTC, and multiple research centers, including two Centers of Excellence. Providing over quarter-million credit hours of instruction annually, the College of Arts and Sciences offers a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum to equip its students in pursuing rich personal and professional lives. It is dedicated to providing educational opportunities that broaden student knowledge within the major areas of human study, in-depth understanding of at least one area of inquiry, and the skills and abilities necessary for a lifetime of learning, career success, and participatory citizenship. The College provides quality undergraduate and graduate education by training students to think critically about their course of study, themselves, and the world around them. Through programs of basic and applied research, the College's faculty and students increase knowledge and address the complex issues, local and global, facing all citizens.

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION

The School of Social Work seeks to be a leader in social work education by: preparing students with cutting-edge social work skills necessary to practice in complex settings; creating knowledge through research and engaged scholarship; reducing poverty, inequality, and social and economic injustice through evidence based practices; and addressing the needs of the Mid-South within a global perspective.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

A primary focus of the Doctor of Social Work program is to enhance human wellbeing and help to meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. This mission is consistent with the values of the social work profession in that all aspects of the program are committed to enhancing service to vulnerable populations while promoting social justice with

focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The program is committed to developing student knowledge, values, and skills essential to competent social work practice, the importance of human relationships, the dignity and worth of all persons and integrity throughout all aspects of professional practice.

SOCIAL DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program is to cultivate visionary professional scholars who are leaders in social work dedicated to fostering transformative change and empowering communities through innovative, inclusive, and ethical practices.

CSWE STATEMENT ON DSW ACCREDITATION

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is pleased to announce the approval and release of the 2025 Accreditation Standards for Practice Doctorate Social Work Programs. The accreditation standards were developed and approved by the Board of Accreditation (BOA) on February 6, 2025. The standards may be reviewed [here](#). The CSWE BOA will begin accepting applications for accreditation on August 1, 2025.

As of the publication of this student handbook, the University of Memphis DSW program has paid the Candidacy Eligibility Fee to initiate the accreditation process. Our DSW program will apply for the Temporary Alternative Pathway for expedited accreditation in August or September 2025.

DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM COMPETENCIES

Doctors of Social Work (DSW) are practitioner-scholars who can generate new social work knowledge and respond to increasingly complex practice. DSWs are leaders and decision-makers who utilize complex data and research, supervision, teaching, and management skills to engage in high-level social work practice and direction. A Doctor of Social Work prepared practitioner:

1. (a) Evaluate social work services and practice environments using twenty-first century skills in data-driven analysis and informatics; and (b) contribute to social work knowledge through research and practice.
2. Demonstrate social work leadership and management skills to respond to complex practice environments locally, nationally, and globally.
3. Educate the next generation of social workers to be leaders in a changing practice environment through supervision and training.
4. Demonstrate leadership skills in interdisciplinary environments in collaboration with diverse clients and communities.

ADMISSIONS

Admissions Requirements

Admission to the DSW program requires:

1. A Master of Social Work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.
2. Two years of full-time post-MSW practice experience (or equivalent part-time experience).
3. Submission of transcripts from undergraduate program and MSW program.
4. Submission writing sample
5. International applicants should submit Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores or another acceptable score by the University of Memphis Graduate School (<https://www.memphis.edu/graduateadmissions/future/admission-requirements.php>).
6. A Professional Goal Statement (see the online application for specific requirements).
7. A Professional Resume/CV.
8. Three letters of reference.

The DSW Program Committee reviews all submitted materials. Admissions decisions are made on the applicant's meeting admissions requirements and the overall quality of professional background in social work, scholarship, academic ability, research capacity, and the fitness for the program.

Readmissions Requirements

Once accepted into the DSW program, students are expected to enroll every semester thereafter and make satisfactory progress toward the degree. Students who do not enroll for one semester must apply for readmission compliant with the Graduate Admissions guidelines. Submission of an application for readmission does not ensure acceptance. An application for readmission may be rejected or additional requirements may be imposed on the student.

CURRICULUM

El programa DSW requiere la finalización de un mínimo de cuarenta y ocho (48) horas de crédito.

1. Los estudiantes deben completar treinta (33) horas de crédito de los cursos requeridos. Los cursos requeridos son los siguientes:

- SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research (3)
- SWRK 8030 Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research (3)
- SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory (3)
- SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication (3)
- SWRK 8065 Pedagogy in SW (3)
- SWRK 8080 Managing SW Practice (3)
- SWRK 8100 Developing Fundable Proposals (3)

- SWRK 8102 Social Work Statistics (3)
- SWRK 8155 Informatics & Data-Driven Decision Making in Social Work (3)
- SWRK 8175 Reflective Supervision (3)
- PADM 8600 Admin Theory & Ethics (3)

1. Students are also required to complete a minimum of nine (9) credit hours of electives. Electives must be levels 7000 or 8000, but 6000 level are acceptable at the discretion of the student's advisor (the student's DSW committee chair).
2. Students are required to complete a minimum of six (6) credit hours of Dissertation (SWRK 9000) or Capstone (SWRK 9001).

Sample Study Plan

The DSW program is designed for students to complete their degree in three years. A sample of a three-year study plan is included below (please note that the School of Social Work reserves the right to make changes):

Even-Year Cohort		Odd-Year Cohort	
Year 1			
Fall	PADM 8600/7600 Admin Theory & Ethics	SWRK 8102 Social Work Statistics	3
	SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory	PADM 8600/7600 Admin Theory & Ethics	3
Spring	SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research	SWRK 8030 Qualitative SW Research	3
	SWRK 8065 Pedagogy in SW	SWRK 8075 Reflective Supervision	3
Summer	SWRK 8100 Developing Fundable Proposals	SWRK 8080 Managing SW Practice	3
	Elective	Elective	3
Total			18
Year 2			
Fall	SWRK 8102 Social Work Statistics	SWRK 8155 Informatics & Data-Driven	3
	SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication	SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory	3
Spring	SWRK 8030 Qualitative SW Research	SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research	3
	SWRK 8075 Reflective Supervision	SWRK 8065 Pedagogy in SW	3
Summer	SWRK 8080 Managing SW Practice	SWRK 8100 Develop. Fund. Proposals	3

	Elective	Elective	3
Total			18
Year 3			
Fall	SWRK 8155 Informatics & Data-Driven	SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication	3
	Elective	Elective	3
Spring	SWRK 9000 Capstone	SWRK 9000 Capstone	3
	SWRK 9000 Capstone	SWRK 9000 Capstone	3
Total			12

Courses

SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research (3)

Course covers fundamental strategies for developing a quantitative research study.

SWRK 8030 Qualitative Methods for SW (3)

The purpose of this advanced course is to further prepare doctoral students to organize and conduct qualitative research. Students will learn the history of qualitative methods and the theoretical underpinnings to qualitative data collection and analysis.

SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory (3)

Course covers major theories that have influenced social work research, social work practice, and social welfare policy. The interdisciplinary nature of social work theory and history of social work will be covered. Students will learn methods of theory building and theoretical modeling.

SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication (3)

Course introduces students to the process of writing for publication. Course will be a project-focused seminar in which students will formulate a concept for a scholarly paper, draft the paper, and rewrite the paper based on a review from peers. Course will also cover the process of writing an abstract for a scholarly presentation.

SWRK 8065 Pedagogy in Social Work (3)

Course focuses on aspects of pedagogy that are unique to social work education. Course will cover paradigms for teaching and learning, meeting accreditation standards, evaluating for accreditation, and the unique issues of running field placement.

SWRK 8080 Managing a SW Practice (3)

This course, required in the DSW, is designed to provide social work professionals and clinical

practitioners the skills and knowledge to establish, direct, and administer social work and behavioral health practices. The course covers legal, logistic, and financial issues in developing a private practice.

SWRK 8100 Developing Fundable Proposals (3)

Course is designed to prepare students to apply knowledge of evidence-based interventions and knowledge of policy related to social work practice to the development of a proposal for funding. Foundation knowledge and skills in grant writing will be explored. There will also be emphasis on working effectively with others to operationalize ideas to create a program or a plan in response to a request for proposals/applications. Students will learn to organize a proposal and respond to reviewers. Particular emphasis is placed on proposals for social work practice with culturally diverse, vulnerable and high-risk populations.

SWRK 8102 Social Work Statistics (3)

This course is an applied course intended to introduce students to the statistical tools used for empirical analysis and decision-making in the social work context. This course is designed to provide an introduction to the process of conducting statistical analyses of data relevant to public issues, problems, and policies in the area of social work. Both conceptual understanding and the development of practical applied skills are emphasized throughout the course.

SWRK 8155 Informatics & Data-Driven Decision Making (3)

This course emphasizes the use of information technology in social work practice (1) to improve overall quality of services provided by clinicians as well as (2) to leverage the implicit knowledge of workers so that agencies foster ongoing innovations in service provision.

SWRK 8175 Reflective Supervision (3)

Reflective supervision is a regular collaborative reflection experience between a service provider and supervisor that builds on the supervisee's use of his/her thoughts, feelings, and values within a service encounter. In this course, the student will learn about the origins and history of different models of supervision. Through discussion and practice, the student will learn how supervision can provide a rich opportunity for service providers to further their self-awareness and skills.

PADM 8600 Admin Theory & Ethics (3)

Significance of public administration in American government; includes an introduction to formal organization theory and bureaucracy, decision-making theory, leadership and motivational theory, and current trends and problems in the study of public administration. Prerequisite(s): SPAN 7102 or equivalent.

SWRK 9000 Capstone Project (1-6)

Candidates for graduation will be required to complete a capstone project. Grade of S/U, or IP will be given. Grades for SWRK 9000 will be assigned based on your progress. "Satisfactory" will be assigned when your dissertation is complete (your final semester). IP will be assigned if student is making satisfactory progress based on where the chair and committee believe that

student should be. U will be assigned if the student is not making satisfactory progress towards their capstone project. More information on the capstone project is described below in the “Capstone Project” section of this handbook.

Electives

The DSW program requires the completion of a minimum of nine (9) credit hours (3 courses) of electives. The electives allow students to tailor their program of study to their interests. Students who are interested in higher education teaching can use the electives to complete a certificate in higher education teaching offered through the Department of Leadership in the College of Education. Students who are interested in advanced training in research methods or statistics can use the hours to pursue either a Qualitative Methods or Quantitative Methods Graduate Certificate in the College of Education or a Graduate Certificate in Health Analytics through the School of Public Health. Students who are interested in advanced clinical methods can use their electives to take clinical courses through social work, counseling, or psychology. Students can also use electives to take coursework in a population specialty (e.g., health care, gerontology). The student should take initiative to find electives that will add depth and breadth to their education. It is the student’s responsibility to work with their advisor and/or dissertation committee chair to identify electives that will strengthen the education and skills in their doctoral education. Electives must be levels 7000 or 8000, but 6000 level are acceptable at the discretion of the student’s advisor.

Transfer Credit

Up to fifteen (15) hours of transfer credit may be accepted from another institution provided that: 1) It was earned after the student’s Master of Social Work degree, 2) It falls within the University’s ten-year time to degree limit; and 3) It is deemed relevant to the student’s program of study by the advisor and DSW program director. Transfer credit that is substituted for required DSW courses must be deemed to meet all of the learning objectives in the equivalent DSW course.

Shared Credit

Credit may not be shared between the Master of Social Work program and the Doctor of Social Work program. If the student previously took a DSW course as an MSW elective, they may substitute those credit hours for additional elective hours. Courses taken during the MSW program should not be repeated in the DSW program. Up to fifteen (15) hours may be shared between the DSW program and a graduate certificate, a second master’s degree, or a second doctoral degree.

Credit for Work or Life Experience

In compliance with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Accreditation Standards for Practice Doctorate Social Work Programs, the University of Memphis DSW program does not grant credit for life experience or prior work experience.

Distance Learning & Residency

The DSW program is offered via distance learning. All courses are available online. The

University of Memphis has resources for online teaching through the UM Global. The UM Global provides review of courses, workshops on online teaching, online tutoring, online writing support, and other online support for students. Furthermore, students are asked to come to campus approximately one week per year to complete in-person residencies. The in-person residencies provide the opportunity to become oriented to the program, meet fellow students, meet the faculty, and form dissertation committees. Students are also required to have synchronous meetings. The plan for the in-person residencies are as follows.

Year 1 Residency: A New Doctoral Student

Year 1 residency is designed to provide an overview of the DSW program and provide skills that are not taught elsewhere. The goal of Year 1 Residency is to prepare the student to embark on the DSW program and to create a cohort.

Year 2 Residency: Focusing on Your Research

Year two residency is designed to bring DSW students together and to prepare second-year students for the comprehensive exam and their proposal for their capstone project. Specific skills are highlighted.

Year 3 Residency: Capstone and Graduation

Year 3 residency focuses on the Completion of the capstone project and graduation. Third-year students are also involved in sharing their experiences with first- and second-year students.

RETENTION, GRADING, AND GRADUATION

Retention Requirements

Retention requirements for the DSW program include:

1. Students must comply with all retention standards of the Graduate School at the University of Memphis.
2. Students are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00. Should the student's cumulative GPA fall below that mark, a period of one semester will be allowed to correct the deficiency. Students failing to improve their GPA to an acceptable level in that time will be dismissed from the program.
3. No more than 6 hours of "C-," "C" or "C+" will be applied toward meeting degree requirements. No grade of a D+ or lower will count toward the degree.
4. Students must pass a comprehensive examination.
5. Students must engage in ethical conduct and follow the University of Memphis Code of Student Conduct and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Students in the DSW program are expected to demonstrate exemplary leadership in following all ethical standards.

Retention Review

Students who fail to meet one of the five criteria under the retention policy will be reviewed for retention. A retention committee will be formed consisting of the student's committee. If the student has not yet formed a committee, the DSW director will establish a committee for the

purpose of a retention review. The committee will meet with the student and hear the student's concerns. If the committee determines that termination is not warranted, the committee will make specific recommendations to support the student in improving their academic or professional performance. If the committee determines that termination is warranted, the committee members will complete the appropriate Graduate School form.

The termination procedures and the termination appeals process will follow the process outlined in the [University of Memphis Graduate Catalog](#). Under this process, the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the College of Arts & Sciences will review the recommendation for termination. If the Associate Dean agrees, they will write a letter and forward their decision to the Dean of the Graduate School for a final decision.

Students have a right to appeal a termination decision to the Graduate Appeals Committee for Grade and Academic Performance Retention Appeals. Students should follow all procedures outline in the [University of Memphis Graduate Catalog](#).

Grading

All courses in the DSW program are graded A-F with the exception of SWRK 9000: Dissertation and SWRK 9001: Capstone. SWRK 9000 & 9001 will be graded as "S," "U," or "IP." A grade of "IP" will be assigned if a dissertation or capstone is not completed in the semester enrolled. When the student completes the dissertation or capstone, the "IP" grade will be replaced with "S."

Grade Appeals

Grade appeals will follow the procedures outlined in the [University of Memphis Graduate Catalog](#). All students should refer to the Graduate Catalog for specific instructions, appeals forms, and deadlines for each stage of the process.

- The first step in the process is for the student to appeal to the instructor and try to resolve the matter with the instructor.
- If the matter is not resolved with the instructor, the student may next appeal to the School chair.
- If the matter is not resolved after the appeal to the School chair, the appeal will proceed to the College of Arts & Sciences Dean.
- If the matter is not resolved after the appeal to the College Dean, the final level of appeal is the Graduate Appeals Committee.

Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements for the DSW program include:

1. Completion of all required coursework with no more than 6 hours of C (i.e., "C-," "C" or "C+") grades.
2. Completion of the comprehensive exam
3. Completion of a capstone project or dissertation.

Timeline to Graduation

The primary procedures and timeline of the DSW program are as below:

- By the end of the first semester of doctoral studies (fall of the first year), a faculty advisor, called a DSW Committee Chair, is assigned to each student in consultations with the DSW program director.
- During the second semester (spring of the first year) The student then works with his/her DSW committee chair to select at least two more committee members among the faculty who hold full Graduate Status in the School of Social Work at the University of Memphis.
- By the end of the second year of doctoral studies, the student takes the comprehensive exam and submits a written proposal to his/her DSW committee.
- Once the written proposal is approved by the student's DSW committee, the student may begin work on the capstone project.
- At the end of the spring semester of the third year, the student submits the completed capstone project and conducts a public presentation of the capstone project at the School of Social Work.

MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a central part of the doctoral student experience and is critical to doctoral student learning. All students will receive mentorship throughout the program. In the first semester of the program, students will be mentored by the DSW director. Beginning in the second semester, the student's mentoring relationship will shift to the student's committee chair. The committee chair will continue to mentor and support the student throughout the process. It is both the student's and the faculty member's responsibility to ensure that they are holding regular meetings to support and guide the student's progress through the program. During the student's first year, the meetings may occur as infrequently as once per semester. During the second and third years, the meetings should occur at least monthly during semesters that the student is enrolled. Students are strongly encouraged to give feedback to their mentors about their preference for frequency of meetings. Since the DSW is an online program, meetings will typically occur over Teams at a time that is convenient for both the student and the faculty member. If the student prefers to meet face-to-face, they may schedule in person meetings with their faculty member.

ADVISING

Advising in the DSW program has the following purposes: Supporting students through completing the required portion of the curriculum and helping students identify electives and a capstone that meets their interests and is tailored to their career goals. When the student starts the program, the DSW program director is the student's advisor. Typically, by the end of the first semester, but no later than by the end of the first year, the student selects a chair of their committee. From that point until graduation, the chair will be the student's academic advisor.

FORMING A DSW COMMITTEE

In order to promote successful and timely completion of the DSW program, students must form a DSW Committee. The DSW committee will oversee the comprehensive exam, will approve the

proposal, and will oversee the successful completion of the capstone project. Upon admission to the DSW program, each student will work with the director of the DSW program for academic advising until they have selected a dissertation chair (generally a chair is selected in the fall semester of year 1 and no later than the spring semester of year 1). Once the student has selected a DSW Committee Chair, the DSW committee chair will take over and serve as the academic advisor. The committee chair must be a full member of the [University of Memphis Graduate Faculty](#). The DSW committee chair will meet with the student prior to registration for courses, to ensure the student is on track, discuss questions and/or concerns, and discuss progress in the DSW program. The advisor is responsible for clearing student PIN and entering permits for social work courses to allow students to register. By initiating regular advising meetings, the student needs to seek professional success and enhance academic performance. The student should also make sure to discuss with the advisor the follows:

- Frequency of advising meetings
- A plan and tentative time frame for capstone work.
- Recommendations for members of the DSW committee

The DSW committee chair will provide guidance to the student on the following areas:

- IRB protocol application for the capstone project, if needed.
- Development and implementation of the capstone project.
- Opportunities for internal/external grants to support the capstone project, when available.
- Opportunities for conferences and presentations.
- Opportunities for participating in research projects and publications

By the end of the second semester of doctoral studies, the student should have assembled his or her DSW Committee in consultation with the DSW committee chair, who is the student's major advisor. The DSW committee consists of three faculty members who hold full Graduate Status at the University of Memphis. Among the three members in the DSW Committee, two members must be from the School of Social Work but the other one may be from an external discipline. External DSW committee members who do not hold Full Graduate Faculty Status with the University of Memphis may be added to the committee only as fourth members, and external DSW committee members must hold doctoral degrees.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Successful completion of the comprehensive exam is the official marker of the move from doctoral student to doctoral candidate. Completion of the comprehensive exam is intended to signify sufficient knowledge, skill, and mastery to enable the student to move to the capstone phase and continue their progress towards successful completion of the capstone. The comprehensive exam and capstone proposal may be pursued concurrently. The comprehensive exam consists of three sections and each section is graded on a rubric by the student's DSW Committee. The questions for each of the sections of the comprehensive exam are selected by the student's DSW Committee from a question bank developed by the DSW faculty and available to the student before the exam. The questions are in essay format. The grading

rubrics for each of the sections of the comprehensive exam are developed by the entire DSW faculty body of the School of Social Work at the University of Memphis and available to the student before the exam. The three sections of the exam are:

1. Quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation.
2. Social work leadership and management
3. Teaching and supervision skills and practice

The DSW committed chair schedules the comprehensive exam after the student has completed SWRK 8020, Quantitative SW Research; SWRK 8030, Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research; SWRK 8040, Advanced SW Theory; SWRK 8050, Writing for Publication; SWRK 8065, Pedagogy in SW; SWRK 8080, Managing SW Practice; SWRK 8100, Developing Fundable Proposals; SWRK 8102, Social Work Statistics; and SWRK 8175, Reflective Supervision. The exam is scheduled at the end of Year 2 after the end of the summer semester in year 2. During the summer semester of Year 2, the student's DSW committee gives access to the student to the question bank and grading rubrics. Then the DSW committee chair selects one or two questions for each section of the comprehensive exam from the question bank in consultation with the rest of the DSW committee and then provides the questions and specific instructions for the exam to the student. The student is given the exam as a take home exam and provided a specific deadline for submission of at least two weeks but no more than three weeks. The student must submit the exam to the DSW committee chair by 11:59 pm on the deadline date. If the student misses this deadline, the exam will be considered failed and will not be graded unless extenuating and well-documented circumstances exist. If the need for an extension should arise, the student must communicate with the DSW committee chair as soon as the student becomes aware that such circumstances exist.

Once the student has completed the comprehensive exam, each committee member grades each section of the comprehensive exam on a rubric available to student before the exam and the results for each section are averaged for the student and reported to the DSW program director on the internal comps reporting form alongside the University of Memphis Comprehensive Exam Form indicating whether the student has passed the comprehensive exam. The student's DSW committee has two weeks to grade the exam and report the grade to the student and to the School of Social Work. A passing grade is 80% or above. If the student does not achieve 80% on any section, the section is not considered "passed". In the case a student does not pass one or more of the sections of the comprehensive exam, student may retake that section(s) one more time. Student does not need to retake sections in which a passing grade has been obtained. Exam retake occurs under the same conditions as the first exam but the student's DSW committee selects **new** questions for the exam. A retake should occur no later than the end of the fall semester of Year 3.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

The capstone project and capstone project presentation are viewed as the culminating experience of the DSW student's academic training, reflecting the student's capability for independent research.

Capstone Proposal

By August of year 2 (at the end of year 2), the doctoral student must submit a proposal for a capstone project to his/her DSW committee. The comprehensive exam and proposal may be pursued concurrently. The proposal must be a written document 5 to 10 pages in length following APA formatting. The capstone proposal must include **specification of the outcome product, the justification for the choice of said outcome product, and a timeline**. The student may choose among options 1, 2, and 3 below in consultation with his/her DSW committee chair:

1. Option 1: Student submits a proposal for a project to be implemented at the agency student works or another partner agency. This project could be assessment of secondary data and report, training, survey, or other small project implementation. Consideration should be given to feasibility within time constraints. Project must be research-based, have a theory base, and identify clear outcomes.
1. Option 2: Student completes a proposal to write and submit two scholarly articles, one conceptual and one research. In the proposal, student clearly articulates the conceptualization of the articles, the rationale, how the two articles are tied together, and how they contribute to the literature. Papers may be co-authored with chair but coauthored articles must follow University of Memphis policy (§5.2):
https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/current_students/td-prep.php
2. Option 3: Student completes a proposal for a substantial project not described in options 1 and 2. The substantial project may involve art, the development of a non-profit, a curriculum, a course, or any other project that is consistent with the goals of the DSW and involves scholarly and/or evaluative activity. The project must be developed in consultation with the student's DSW committee chair and approved by the DSW committee chair using the appropriate form.

Once the student has submitted the capstone proposal, the student's DSW committee may ask the student to modify the proposed project or parts thereof, enhance the proposed project, or submit an entirely different proposed project. The student's DSW committee may ask the student to submit several iterations of the capstone proposal before it is approved. The proposal approval form (internal form #3) is not signed until the student's DSW committee has approved the proposal and has allowed student to proceed to capstone project.

Capstone Project

During Year 3 of the DSW, the student will implement the capstone project as per the student's approved proposal.

1. Option 1: A project that is implemented at the agency student works or another partner agency. This project may involve assessment of secondary data and report, training, survey, or other small project implementation. Project must be research-based, have a theory base, and identify clear outcomes.

2. Option 2: Student writes and submits two scholarly articles, one conceptual and one research. The student must also produce a 2-page summary in which the student clearly articulates the conceptualization of the articles, the rationale, how the two articles are tied together, and how they contribute to the literature. Papers may be co-authored with chair but coauthored articles must follow University of Memphis policy (§5.2):
https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/current_students/td-prep.php
3. Option 3: Student completes a substantial project not described in options 1 and 2. The substantial project may involve art, the development of a non-profit, a curriculum, a course or any other project that is consistent with the goals of the DSW and involves scholarly and/or evaluative activity. As part of the capstone project the student must also produce a 2-page summary in which the student clearly articulates the conceptualization of the project, the connection to the DSW goals and objectives, the research/assessment/evaluation component, and the relevance and application of the project to the discipline. Note that if a DSW student chooses to develop a course as a capstone project, the course must be developed fully including the CANVAS shell, and the School of Social Work retains the rights to the course, including the right to implement, modify, and teach the course as the School of Social Work deems appropriate.

The doctoral candidate will take at least one semester (but it may be more) to implement and assess project per the proposal and write and submit a full report to chair and the rest of the committee. In case the student has chosen options 2 or 3, a 2-page summary per the description above must be included in the capstone project submission. Once the doctoral candidate has submitted the final capstone project to the student's DSW committee, the DSW committee evaluates the project and issues a decision. The decision of the committee must be unanimous and may be one of the following decisions:

- **Pass.** This decision indicates that the committee unanimously agrees that the student has satisfactorily completed the capstone project. If the student's DSW committee recommends minor revisions to the capstone project, the committee should feel free to leave oversight of revisions to the student's DSW committee chair. A final presentation may be scheduled at this time and the student's DSW committee will sign the Final Capstone Project Approval Form (internal form #4) at the time of the presentation.
- **Not Pass.** This decision indicates that the committee is not satisfied with the capstone project work but anticipates that it could be made satisfactory with significant revisions. Final Capstone Project Approval Form (internal form #4) is not signed and the capstone presentation is not scheduled until the student's DSW committee approves or "passes" the capstone project. The DSW committee must provide the student specific instructions on how to improve capstone project. If one or two members of the DSW committee are not satisfied with the capstone project, then the members of the DSW committee who are not

satisfied with the capstone project must work with the student to improve the project. If the student is not able to pass the capstone project within 3 years of the “not pass” decision, the student fails out of the DSW program.

Capstone Project Presentation

Once the student’s DSW committee has approved the capstone project and considered it final or final with minor revisions, the DSW committee chair schedules the student’s capstone project presentation to the School of Social Work. The capstone presentation is the final activity in the DSW program and once it has been completed the student has fulfilled all requirements and may be called “doctor”. Once student has completed his/her capstone project and the student’s DSW committee has approved it, the student will conduct a public presentation to the School of Social Work. The presentation may take place in April for a spring-semester graduation, in July for a summer-semester graduation, and in November for a fall-semester graduation. The capstone presentation is public and will be announced to School of Social Work faculty and DSW students by the student’s DSW committee chair at least a week before it takes place. The capstone presentation consists of a presentation highlighting the student’s capstone project including the relevant literature, the methods used, and the results of the project including the implications for social work and for the community. The capstone project presentation may take 30 to 45 minutes with 15 to 20 minutes for questions from those present. The capstone presentation is a formal event and at the end of the presentation internal form #4 is completed, signed, and submitted to the DSW program director. The student’s DSW committee chair will complete all grading to allow student to graduate and participate in commencement. Student’s DSW committee chair is tasked with hooding the doctoral candidate at commencement. In the event that the DSW committee chair is unable to participate in the commencement ceremony, the DSW committee chair must designate one of the other DSW committee members as a substitute. It is the responsibility of the student’s committee chair to make sure that all grades and documents required by the Graduate School at the University of Memphis are submitted in a timely manner, and that the doctoral candidate is hooded at commencement if candidate chooses to participate.

DISSERTATION

Students have the option to complete a dissertation for their capstone project if they choose. The dissertation must contain original research based on either primary data collection or secondary data analysis. The empirical data for the dissertation may be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods in nature. The dissertation work needs to be of publication quality, and acceptable to the school of social work and to a committee of dissertation readers. The traditional doctoral dissertation consists of a statement of the problem, specific aims, and related research questions/hypotheses; a literature review; explanation of research methodology, data collection procedure, analysis of data; presentation of results; and a discussion of findings and their social work implications. A suggested outline of chapters is as follows.

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Results
- Chapter 5: Discussion
- Chapter 6: Implications for Policy & Practice

All phases of the dissertation research are primarily the responsibility of the student, with the dissertation committee serving mainly as a reviewer and sounding board. Prior to conducting the dissertation research, the student must take an oral proposal defense to the dissertation committee and then obtain approval for the research by the Institute Review Board (IRB) at the University of Memphis. Upon completion of the independent dissertation research work acceptable to the committee, the student must take a final oral defense of his or her dissertation to the dissertation committee and all other interested persons. The defense includes the student's presentation of a summary of the dissertation research work and follows responses to questions of the committee. The student receives immediate oral feedback (i.e., 'Pass,' 'Pass with Revisions,' 'Not Pass' or 'Fail') following the oral defense. The dissertation should refer to the dissertation guidelines of the Graduate School and follow the reporting standards in general of the American Psychological Association. The primary procedures and timeline of the dissertation are as below:

- By the end of the first year of doctoral studies, a faculty advisor is assigned to each student in consultations with the DSW program coordinator.
- By the end of the second year of doctoral studies, the dissertation proposal is developed and the dissertation committee is formed in consultations with the faculty advisor.
- By August (fall semester) of the third year of doctoral studies, the oral proposal defense of the dissertation is held to the dissertation committee.
- By March (spring semester) of the third year of doctoral studies, the oral dissertation defense is held to the dissertation committee and all other interested persons.

Dissertation Committee

By the end of the second year of doctoral studies, students completing a dissertation should assemble his or her dissertation committee in consultation with the dissertation advisor. The dissertation committee consists of three graduate faculty members. Among the three, the two members must be from social work but the other one may be from an external discipline. The student must have his or her committee organized prior to registering dissertation credits. The student should complete the Dissertation Faculty Committee Form and submit the complete form to the Graduate School as soon as the committee is formed. The Dissertation Faculty Committee Form can be located at the website of Resources of the Graduate School. The

student is responsible for having all required forms related to his or her dissertation completed and submitted in a timely manner.

Dissertation Proposal Defense

The student must submit a written dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee prior to conducting his or her dissertation research. The dissertation proposal must be reviewed and approved by the dissertation committee. For this purpose, the student should work closely with his or her committee members to produce an acceptable dissertation proposal. The student should submit the proposal to the committee and ask for an oral proposal defense within 4 weeks after submission of the proposal. The oral defense of the dissertation proposal should be held before the dissertation committee by August (fall semester) of the third year of doctoral studies. At the defense, the dissertation committee reviews the student's dissertation proposal consisting of the first three chapters (i.e., introduction, literature review, and methodology) and provides feedback for revisions. After committee approval the student must submit his or her IRB protocol application to the University Human Subjects Review Committee for human subject research. After obtaining approval of the IRB, the student can carry through his or her dissertation research work and write up the results with committee advisement.

The dissertation proposal defense is different from the final oral dissertation defense in that students do not pass or fail the proposal defense and the meeting for the proposal defense is not public, and only the student and the committee members attend. The goal of the proposal defense is for members of the dissertation committee to reach consensus that the student has designed a research project that is feasible to complete and will contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. If the committee cannot reach consensus that the student is ready to move forward with the research project, it is responsible for advising the student about what should be done to develop a satisfactory proposal. If the student is struggling with moving forward with the dissertation proposal, they may elect to switch to capstone project at this time.

The dissertation proposal constitutes the first three chapters of the dissertation (i.e., introduction, literature review, and methodology). The proposal should also discuss expected results and include references. The first chapter of introduction should cover an introduction of the research topic, an overarching background of the research problem, statements of clear and focused research problem, research purpose and objectives, research questions/hypotheses, significance of the research, and definitions of the terms. The second chapter of literature review should be detailed and comprehensive reviews of literature on the topic of interest as well as a theory/theoretical framework. The third chapter of methodology should include sub-sections that cover research design, settings, participants and recruitment, data collection and measures, and data analysis (including proposed outcome analyses and

power calculations, if appropriate). Expected results may be a paragraph or two that describe what findings are expected based on the questions/hypotheses, as well as potential obstacles and their solutions. The references section should be formatted in APA style and include all citations. The student should complete all required [University of Memphis Graduate School forms](#) at the proposal stage.

Dissertation Defense

A satisfactory final oral dissertation defense is required for the approval of a dissertation research. A copy of the final dissertation should be given to each of the student's committee members. Upon the receipt of the copy of the dissertation, the committee members should complete the review of the dissertation and make a decision of holding a final oral dissertation defense within 15 working days. When the student's committee has reached consensus that the dissertation is ready for defense, the student should consult with his or her dissertation chairperson to aid in scheduling the final oral defense of the dissertation research. The student must work closely with the chairperson to secure a list of preferred dates and times for the defense. The student will then help contact these persons to determine a best date for all concerned and will oversee making final arrangements for the defense meeting. The final oral dissertation defense should be held by March (spring semester) of the third year of doctoral studies. The oral defense requires participation by all members of the dissertation committee. The committee members may participate electronically if they cannot be physically present (e.g., restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting professional activities away from campus). The student is responsible for scheduling the defense and ensuring that the electronic system is adequate for the intended purpose. At the final oral dissertation defense, the student presents his or her dissertation work to the dissertation committee and all other interested persons. The final oral dissertation defense is expected to take approximately 30 minutes but no more than 40 minutes followed by an open question and answer session with guests. After guests' questions are answered, they are dismissed, and the student responds to questions from his or her committee members. After this questioning, the committee votes to approve or disapprove the dissertation. The decision of the committee must be unanimous. The final oral dissertation defense may result in one of the following decisions:

- **Pass.** This decision indicates that the committee unanimously agrees that the student has satisfactorily defended his or her dissertation research work. When the student has only very minor revisions to make after defending the dissertation, the committee should feel free to sign the report and leave oversight of revisions to the chairperson.
- **Pass with Conditions.** This decision indicates that extensive revision is necessary, but that the committee is willing to examine the revised dissertation research work without requiring another oral defense.
- **Not Pass.** This decision indicates that the committee is not satisfied with the

dissertation work. At this point in process, the student and committee may revisit whether it is advisable to switch to capstone. Capstone may be the better option if the student has done substantial work, but the work is not of publishable quality and cannot be approved as a dissertation.

The total defense lasts approximately one and a half hour. The student should bring the partially completed Thesis/Dissertation Defense Results Form (accessible at the website of Resources of the Graduate School) with him or her to their defense. In case of holding an electronic oral defense, the student should have the chairperson of the dissertation committee obtaining the partially completed form or a copy of the form scanned at least five working days before the defense date. Once the student has successfully defended his or her dissertation, the committee completes the form and submits it to the Graduate School according to the guidelines of the Graduate School. When scheduling the oral defense, the student should be mindful of the Graduate School deadlines for submitting completed dissertations. The student's final oral defense of the dissertation before the committee is the final step for the doctoral degree requirements. When the committee requests revisions of the student's dissertation at the defense, the student should submit the revisions within ten working days to the committee for approval. Students must be sure to complete all required [University of Memphis Graduate School forms](#) at the defense stage and submit their dissertation to ProQuest.

TUITION AND FEES

Admission to the Doctor of Social Information on current tuition and fees can be obtained from the University of Memphis Bursar's Office website (<http://bf.memphis.edu/finance/bursar/>). Graduate students may be eligible for a variety of financial aid options. Students should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For general financial aid information for graduate students, including Assistantships, Fellowships, Work Study Programs, Awards and Scholarships, students should inquire at the Student Financial Aid office (www.memphis.edu/FinancialAid/). Students are encouraged to investigate opportunities for student aid offered by the University of Memphis, including loans, scholarships and assistantship opportunities.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

DSW students are strongly encouraged to participate in their education. The School of Social Work has two student organizations: The Student Social Work Organization (SSWO) and the Coalition for Black Social Workers (CBSW) and DSW students are strongly encouraged to participate and have been leaders in these organizations in the past.

The DSW program director holds regular meetings with students. Students are encouraged to join and give feedback. Students also fill out an evaluation on the DSW residency and student feedback is considered when planning residency for the next year. Finally, students are encouraged to elect a representative to sit in on DSW program committee meetings and the

School of Social Work full faculty meetings.

Students have the opportunity to give feedback on the curriculum through annual surveys. In addition, the student body is encouraged to elect a student to sit on the DSW program committee. This student can give feedback on curriculum.

FINANCIAL AID

Federal Funding

Admission Limited federal assistance, in the form of loans, is available. Contact the Office of Student Aid at (901) 678-2303 for more information. Some students may seek aid through VA benefits or Title IV funds. VA benefits and Title IV funds for enrollment fees are subject to cancellation and immediate repayment if the recipient stops attending, whether or not he/she has withdrawn or dropped a course. The instructor will report the last known date of attendance as the “unofficial withdrawal date.” Students who stopped attending will be assigned a grade of “F” in courses from which they have not withdrawn according to the policies of the university.

From time to time, the School of Social Work will have Federal traineeships or funded research assistantships available. Faculty make every effort to secure these types of funds for students, but they are not guaranteed. These types of funding opportunities may be tied to the student’s ability to work on campus, the student’s ability to work during the day, or the student’s current work setting.

Graduate Assistantships

The School of Social Work awards a small number of graduate assistantships annually. Serving as a graduate assistant provides a stipend for the academic year plus a partial waiver of tuition and fees. The School has the option of awarding either part-time or full-time graduate assistantships. Part-time assistantships waive some in tuition and fees and provide half of the stipend. Both types of assistantships require the student to be enrolled as a full-time student. Social work graduate assistantships require weekly service to the School of approximately 10-20 hours. This service normally takes the form teaching a class and may also include aiding one or more faculty members with their research or teaching responsibilities. Appointments of graduate assistants are made on an annual basis but may be renewed by the School of Social Work for one additional year, depending on performance. A yearly application is required. A graduate assistant is expected to make satisfactory progress toward the completion of his or her degree. To do this, a graduate assistant must enroll for a minimum of six hours of course work per semester and must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 at all times. Failure to maintain a grade point average of 3.0 disqualifies a student from holding a future graduate assistantship. Once a student has reached doctoral candidate status, the student is considered full time by taking one hour of capstone project credit.

APPENDIX A – TIMELINE

DSW Capstone Project Timeline and Primary Tasks

Program Year (Semester)	Deadline	Task	Document	
Program Year (Semester)	Deadline Per Graduate School		Document	Student initiates form and obtain signatures upon passing the
3 (Late Fall or Early Spring) 1 (Fall)	Guidelines for semester of expected graduation December	Student must complete the doctoral candidacy form and submit it to the Graduate School per University of Memphis guidelines. Pay attention to dates. Advising by Committee Chair continues.	UofM Form #2 DSW Candidacy Form Departmental Form #1 Committee	Student initiates form and obtain signatures in order. Final signed copy is emailed to DSW Director, who will then email it to Graduate School.
		Student completes capstone project per approved proposal. Student presents capstone project to the School of Social Work Community. Form is signed upon successful completion of capstone project AND presentation to the School of Social Work.	Appointment Departmental	Committee Chair submits signed form to DSW Director.
3 (Spring or Summer)	May and August	Advising by Committee Chair continues until graduation.	Form #4 Capstone Project Approval Form	Student and DSW Committee Chair.
2 (Fall)	December	toward achieving goals	--	Student and DSW Committee Chair.
2 (After Summer Semester)	August	Student takes comprehensive exam. Exam is graded by student's committee. Result of exam is reported in official UofM form to DSW Director and Graduate School. If student is not able to pass the comprehensive exam, student is not allowed to register in capstone hours. Student may take comprehensive exam twice. Advising by Committee Chair continues.	Departmental Form #2 and UofM Form #1 Comprehensive Exam Results Form	Student initiates form and obtain signatures upon passing the comprehensive exam. Final signed copy is emailed to DSW Director, who will then email it to Graduate School.
2 (Spring or Summer)	August	Student submits written proposal for capstone project (5-10 pages) to committee for approval. Committee may approve with revisions and changes. Advising by Committee Chair continues.	Departmental Form #3 Proposal Approval Form	Student initiates form and obtains signatures in order. Final signed copy is emailed to DSW Director

Departmental Form#

1. DSW COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT FORM
2. INTERNAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM FORM
3. CAPSTONE PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM
4. FINAL CAPSTONE PROJECT APPROVAL FORM

All departmental forms can be found in Appendices B-E.

University of Memphis forms and additional information can be found in Appendix E.

APPENDIX B – INTERNAL FORM #1

Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program School of Social Work Internal Form #1 DSW COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT FORM

Date: _____

Student's Full Name: _____ Banner ID: U _____

Current Mailing Address: _____

Street City, State Zip Code: _____

Email Address: _____

FACULTY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS (Must have Full Graduate Status):

Name (print)	Role (chair, member)	Signature

ADDITIONAL/EXTERNAL MEMBER(S) TO COMMITTEE:

Name (print)	Affiliation	Signature

**DSW Committee Chair and Student to retain a signed copy for their records.
Please send a signed copy to DSW Program Director.**

APPENDIX C – INTERNAL FORM #2

Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program School of Social Work Internal Form #2 INTERNAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM FORM

Date of Comprehensive Exam: _____

Student's Full Name: _____ Banner ID: U _____

Email Address: _____

Comprehensive Exam Results:

Competency	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Average Score	Pass
Quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation					
Social work leadership and management					
Teaching and supervision skills and practice					

RETAKE Comprehensive Exam Results. RETAKE DATE: _____

Competency	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Average Score	Pass
Quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation					
Social work leadership and management					
Teaching and supervision skills and practice					

APPROVAL:

DSW Committee Chair: _____ Date: _____

**DSW Committee Chair and Student to retain a signed copy for their records.
Please send a signed copy to DSW Program Director.**

APPENDIX D - INTERNAL FORM #3

Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program School of Social Work Internal Form #3 CAPSTONE PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM

Date: _____

Student's Full Name: _____ Banner ID: U _____

Email Address: _____

Type of Project: _____

Title of Project: _____

Description of Project: _____

Is IRB Approval Needed? _____

DSW COMMITTEE APPROVALS

Role	Name (print)	Signature
Chair		
Member		
Member		
Member		

Note that if a DSW student chooses to develop a course as a capstone project, the course must be developed fully including the CANVAS shell, and the School of Social Work retains the rights to the course, including the right to implement, modify, and teach the course as the School of Social Work deems appropriate.

APPROVAL:

DSW Committee Chair: _____ Date: _____

Student is responsible for obtaining all signatures and submitting a signed copy to DSW Program Director. Approved proposal (5-10 pages) must be attached to this form.

APPENDIX E - INTERNAL FORM #4

Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program School of Social Work Internal Form #4 FINAL CAPSTONE PROJECT APPROVAL FORM

Date: _____

Student's Full Name: _____ Banner ID: U _____

Email Address: _____

Type of Project: _____

Title of Project: _____

Description of Project: _____

DSW COMMITTEE APPROVALS FOR CAPSTONE PROJECT:

Role	Name (print)	Signature
Chair		
Member		
Member		
Member		
Member		

DATE OF CAPSTONE PRESENTATION: _____

DSW Committee Chair: _____ Date: _____

**DSW Committee Chair and Student to retain a signed copy for their records.
Please send a signed copy to DSW Program Director.**

APPENDIX F – UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS FORMS

Refer to the websites of the Graduate School and DSW Student Handbook for detailed guidance:

- DSW Student Handbook:
<https://www.memphis.edu/socialwork/programs/doctoral.php>
- The dates for each semester:
https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/current_students/graduation.php

UofM Form #:

5. Comprehensive Exam Results Form:
<https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/pdfs/forms/compexamresults2.pdf>
6. Doctoral Candidacy Form:
https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/current_students/candidacy-doc-instructions.php