

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are frequently asked questions regarding admission to the doctoral program at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. Browse by topic or [download a pdf with all the information](#). Still have questions about the doctoral program? Please [email Sherry Melecki](#) or call her at 512-471-3925.

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How do I apply to the PhD program?

Applicants to the PhD program must [submit](#) the following:

- A completed [online application](#).
- Complete transcripts from your previous institutions (uploaded with online application):

You can have your transcript(s) sent electronically. Institutions that are on the Texas Electronic Transcript Network or which use the national ANSI ASC X12 transcript format ([SPEEDE](#)) can provide electronic transcripts. The [Graduate and International Admissions Center \(GIAC\)](#) prefers to receive electronic transcripts because they can be processed much faster than paper transcripts. Check with the registrar of your institution to find out if transcripts can be sent via the SPEEDE server. We cannot accept electronic transcripts sent in any other format (pdf), by email, or by links to secure web sites.

Upload a copy of your transcript(s) after you have submitted your application for admission and paid the application fee. After you have submitted your [application](#) you will receive an email that contains a link to the Status Check web site where you will be able to upload your transcript. The uploaded transcript(s) is considered to be unofficial but will be used to process your application for admission. *Please do not mail official transcripts or paper copies of your transcripts before you are offered admission.* **Sending paper copies of documents you have uploaded will significantly delay the processing of your application. Before uploading a transcript you must [read these instructions](#).**

- Personal narrative statement (uploaded with online application).
- [Resume](#) (uploaded with online application).
- One official copy of GRE score report (must be less than five years old).
- Three (required), five (preferred) reference letters from persons who are knowledgeable about the applicant's academic, research, and professional abilities and potential (submitted electronically by person giving the reference).
- One copy of publication or other written documents which are representative of academic or professional work (should have been written within the past five years) (uploaded with online application). If you submit a publication, be sure to indicate which specific parts you wrote.
- All accepted applicants are required to have successfully completed a statistics course with a grade of "B" or better. Be sure to include your transcript showing this grade. Research Methods classes do not fulfill this requirement.
- International students from non-English speaking countries are required to submit TOEFL scores.

When should I apply?

The on-line application becomes available on **September 1**. The priority deadline for submitting applications is **December 15**. Materials for incomplete applications will be accepted until **January 20**. However, all available slots may be filled by the time an application completed after the December 15 priority deadline is reviewed. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Who is considered for admission to the PhD program?

Applicants are expected to show capacity for advanced academic work and potential for scholarship. The development of competence to design and carry out rigorous research studies relevant to social work is a critical expectation of the PhD program. Applicants are expected to have a master's degree from an accredited school of social work. Exceptions are sometimes made for students with a master's degree in a related field who have extensive experience in human services. Applicants who do not have a master's degree [should apply to the MSSW program](#) (Master of Science in Social Work).

Must I have a master's degree in social work to be admitted to your PhD program?

Our program is geared toward applicants with a master's degree from an accredited school of social work. Exceptions are sometimes made for students with a master's degree in a related field who have extensive experience in human services. *CSWE accreditation standards currently require that individuals who want to teach practice courses must have a master of social work and at least two years of post-master practice experience.*

Does everyone need to submit GRE and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores?

We require the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) to have been taken within the last five years for ALL applicants. International students whose native country's primary language is not English must also submit scores for both the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of Spoken English (TSE), or the TOEFL-ibt.

What can I do to improve my chances for acceptance?

Make sure your personal narrative statement is clear, concise, and demonstrates your interest in research and a scholarly career. Ask for references from people who are knowledgeable of your academic qualifications and who understand what is expected in doctoral education. Present your best written publication or scholarly paper. To be competitive, your GRE score needs to be a minimum of 300, the higher, the better. TOEFL scores for the four sections should sum to at least 100, and it is preferable to score a minimum of 25 in each section. To be included in the early faculty reviews of applicants, all application materials should be submitted prior to the December 15 deadline.

How are admissions decisions made?

All applications are reviewed by faculty members on the school's PhD Committee. Some of the things they look for are as follows:

- Demonstrated academic achievement commensurate with the demands of doctoral study (undergraduate upper division GPA's below a 3.0 will not be considered).
- An understanding of and commitment to the importance of research within the context of the profession and an ability to define one's own research interests.
- Academic preparation in complementary knowledge areas.
- Career goals that may be enhanced by doctoral education and the specific objectives of our program.
- Recommendations by references

When are applicants notified of admission decisions?

We begin notifying students in mid February. Since enrollment is limited, some applicants will be placed on a waiting list pending an available slot.

What if I am not sure if a doctoral degree is really what I want?

Working toward a PhD requires a major commitment of time, energy and finances. You should not apply to a PhD program until you are ready to make this commitment.

What is the difference between an MSW, DSW, and a PhD?

The MSW is considered the professional degree for social workers interested in a practice career. DSW degrees are practice doctorates, geared toward providing social work practitioners with advanced training in social work practice and leadership. The PhD in social work is the research and [teaching degree](#). PhD graduates generally strive for teaching and research positions at universities or at research institutions.

How long does it take to get a PhD in social work?

It is possible to complete the PhD degree in three years (two years of coursework and one year for dissertation). The majority of students take four or possibly five years to allow time for journal publications, which are often expected in applications for academic positions.

How many courses do I have to take?

The PhD program requires 47 hours of course work and a minimum of 6 hours of dissertation credits.

Can I start taking courses anytime in the academic year?

Because the first year courses are a structured sequence, all students begin taking courses in the fall semester.

Can the program be taken on a part-time basis?

Our goal is for each student to graduate within four to five years of entering the PhD program. In order to reach this goal, students must be enrolled on a full-time basis. Distance learning is not available.

Can I transfer credits from another program?

Doctoral course credits are generally not transferable. A doctoral level course from another program or university may occasionally be counted as an elective if it is relevant to the student's program of work in our PhD program. Courses taken for credit toward a master's degree cannot be transferred. Inquiries should be directed to the Associate Dean for Doctoral Education.

How much does it cost to attend The University of Texas at Austin?

The figures below are *estimates* for graduate students attending The University of Texas at Austin. Individual tuition bills and living expenses will vary from student to student.

- Texas Resident (living off campus) \$41,203 for 12 months
- Non-Texas Resident (living off campus) \$51,533 for 12 months

Is financial support available?

Full-time enrollment is required for fellowship assistance, teaching assistantships, graduate research assistantships and Assistant Instructor positions. TA, GRA, and AI assignments are the primary source of support for the majority of our doctoral students. These positions pay approximately \$1600 per month. A 20-hour per week TA, GRA, or AI position allows you to pay tuition at the in-state rate, receive tuition reduction benefit (currently \$3,784) for each long semester, and provides you with medical insurance at no cost. The tuition reduction benefit is tax free. Students who are in the first three years of the program have priority for TA and GRA positions. Students who have completed their course work, have not taught previously, and can demonstrate preparation for teaching have priority for Assistant Instructor assignments (usually fourth year). Students who are on schedule to complete their degree within four years will have priority for financial assistance over students who have been in the program for more than four years. First year students receive a minimum of \$3,500 in fellowships, second year students receive a minimum of \$2,500 in fellowships, and third year students receive a minimum of \$2,000 in fellowships. When funds are available fourth year students receive a minimum of \$2,000 in fellowships.

Are there opportunities to gain teaching experience while in the doctoral program?

The School of Social Work makes a concerted effort to provide doctoral students with opportunities to teach in our BSW program. Students must have successfully completed Pedagogy (SW 398T) and have been a teaching assistant before they can be considered for an Assistant Instructor position.

Will I be able to keep my current job and go to school at the same time?

The decision to pursue a doctorate requires a major commitment. The most successful students think of the PhD program as a form of employment. Your “job” is to be a full-time student and handle all of the classes, research, teaching assignments, etc. that come with it.

What do I do if I still have questions?

Simply write or call Sherry Melecki (Graduate Program Coordinator for Doctoral Education) at (512) 471-3925, or e-mail at smelecki@mail.utexas.edu or write or call Cynthia Franklin (Associate Dean for Doctoral Education) at (512) 471-0533, or e-mail at cfranklin@austin.utexas.edu. Our mailing address is PhD Program, Steve Hicks School of Social Work, 1925 San Jacinto Blvd. D3500, Austin, TX 78712-0358.