UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

PH.D. PROGRAM MANUAL
2025 - 2027

Please note that this manual is intended for student guidance and does not constitute a contractual agreement between the UTA School of Social Work Ph.D. program and students. Additional sources of information are available through the university website, http://www.uta.edu/, the Graduate School website, https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/gradschool, and the School of Social Work website https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/social-work.

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WELCOME FROM THE PH.D. PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Social Work Doctoral Program at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). We are excited to have you join us as a student and colleague in the School of Social Work. We look forward to working with you and hope your experiences here will help you grow as a researcher, academic, and professional as you work toward your future goals.

The School of Social Work at UTA has been nationally recognized as a leader in producing highly competent researchers and scholars, as well as for innovative models in social work practice and social work education. Building on this rich tradition, our Ph.D. program is aimed at preparing you to engage in collaborative community-focused research on contemporary issues and problems for the advancement of social work practice and social work welfare policy. The program provides advanced training that will enable graduates to assume positions of leadership in the social work profession locally, regionally, and nationally.

Social work is a profession that is committed to the service of others, the enhanced well-being of society, and the promotion of social justice. We are deeply committed to the mission of the university and school, engaging in mutually beneficial scholarly collaborations in the community. We value the expertise and experience of those who live and work in our community, and recognize the need to co-create new knowledge to address important issues with broad-reaching implications for policy and practice, locally, nationally, and globally. This commitment is evidenced in our curriculum, milestones, and opportunities for participation in community-engaged research.

The Ph.D. Program in Social Work at the UTA trains students to become skilled, dynamic, and creative educators and researchers. The Ph.D. is the highest degree awarded in the social work discipline. As such, it is a challenging and consuming journey, yet rewarding and fulfilling. Our expectation is that you will take on this challenge with focus and intensity. Our faculty and coursework will build your skills and abilities, encourage your intellectual growth, and prepare you to address the most complex and pressing issues facing our world.

The handbook is designed to provide you with information to help you as you progress toward earning your Ph.D. We hope that your experience with the program will be enriching and rewarding. Please consult this manual if you have questions, but also follow up with your advisor, supervisors, and mentors for more information. The Ph.D. Program Director and Program Coordinator are always available to address questions and concerns. If we can be of assistance, please contact Program Coordinator Monisa Caldwell at monisa.caldwell@uta.edu, or me at rachel.vothschrag@uta.edu.

Best Wishes,

Rachel Voth Schrag, Ph.D., LCSW
Associate Professor and Director, Doctoral Program

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the PhD Program in Social Work at UTA! We are excited to have you as a student in our program. This manual provides information concerning the program and related issues to help you be fully informed about opportunities, resources, courses, and policies. **While we try to be comprehensive, the manual is not exhaustive, nor is the accuracy of information assured, as policies can change between revisions of this handbook. The definitive guide for graduate students is the University of Texas at Arlington Graduate School website https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/gradschool/resources.** Graduate students are expected to be aware of all policies governing their work and study at the university.

Students should seek to verify any information regarding School and University policies with the current Doctoral Program Student Handbook and the University of Texas at Arlington Graduate School website. There are numerous rules and regulations governing student progress through the doctoral program. You are encouraged to make use of university online resources so that you are aware of School and University policies and procedures throughout your involvement with the doctoral program. If information is unavailable or unclear, you should ask your advisor, Dissertation Chair, or Ph.D. Program Director for clarification.

OVERVIEW OF THE UTA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

HISTORY

In 1967, the Texas State Legislature enacted the establishment of the Graduate School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Arlington. The business and professional communities recognized the great need for social work programs and services due to the rapidly expanding urbanization of the north Texas region. The School admitted its first MSSW students in 1968 and received accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 1970. The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree was founded in 1979 under the auspices of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work and was accredited in 1982. The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Work degree program was initiated in 1983. Before 1983, the Graduate School of Social Work, the College of Business Administration, and the Institute of Urban Studies were jointly involved in operating an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Administration degree program. In 1991, the Graduate School of Social Work became the School of Social Work when the undergraduate program was brought under the administration of the Dean of Social Work.

The School has four degree programs in Social Work - the Bachelor of Social Work, the Master of Social Work, the forthcoming DSW Progrm (to launch in 2026), and the PhD Program, as well as multiple graduate certificate and dual degree options. The programs are supported by approximately 40 full-time research-intensive faculty members, as well as 20+ full time Academic Professional Track Faculty members, and many dedicated staff members and administrators.

GOALS OF THE PHD PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

The goals PhD Program are based on the guiding principles of the School of Social Work:

- Student Access and Success.
- Research and Creative Works.
- Engagement and Community Outreach

The mission of the Ph.D. program is to prepare competent scholars to advance knowledge and scholarship, pursue excellence, provide leadership and service, and promote social and economic justice. The program builds on the premise that social welfare policy and practice must be scientifically and theoretically based and continually responsive to changing local and global societal needs.

Our goal is to prepare students as ethical, competent advanced scholars equipped to engage in research on contemporary issues and problems. The program will prepare students to advance social work practice and social welfare policy and to assume leadership positions as social work researchers, educators, and leaders.

The Social Work PhD Program strives to create an environment that:
- Is attentive to the local and global context in which social work is practiced and assessed, including understanding the needs and assets of individuals, families, organizations, and communities within these contexts.
- Values the diversity of the experience and expertise of individuals, neighborhoods, and groups in the communities in which we engage.
- Focuses on educating students in research methods to practice cultural humility in engagement with stakeholders to assess issues and develop solutions.
- Engages in mutually beneficial collaborations in the development, implementation, and dissemination of research with individuals, groups, communities, and organizations.
- Supports student excellence through innovative strategies in education, professional development, and mentorship.

Upon completion of the Ph.D. Program, students will display competency in:
- Application of social work theory and theory development.
- Quantitative and qualitative research methods and data analysis.
- Theory, research, and policy as applied to a specialty focus area selected by the student.
- Underlying values, ethics, and social and economic justice in the scientific inquiry in social work.
- Research as applied to social work practice, policy, advocacy, and social work education.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH

The Ph.D. Program is part of the Office of Research in the School of Social Work, located in the Social Work and Smart Hospital Building, Suite 108. All staff and faculty that have key roles in the administration of the Ph.D. Program, as well as the Ph.D. students themselves, have offices within this suite.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

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PH.D. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

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Ph.D. Program Committee

The Ph.D. Program Committee is a subcommittee of the Committee of Graduate Studies and is made up of four faculty members, a Ph.D. Student, the Program Coordinator, and the Ph.D. Program Director. The Ph.D. Program Committee advises the Ph.D. Director on program policy and addresses curriculum issues for the Ph.D. program. The faculty of the school of social work is ultimately responsible for the curriculum of the PhD program.

OVERVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The Ph.D. program equips social work scholars to engage in research on contemporary issues and problems for the advancement of social work practice and social welfare policy. It also prepares students to assume leadership positions as social work educators, researchers, and agency administrators. The School of Social Work prepares students to develop competence in social work and prepare students to uphold the core values of the social work profession. The Dallas-Fort Worth area has a distinct history and set of challenges and opportunities that offer lessons and insights for social work in diverse environments. In the classroom and research experiences, we encourage the development of self-awareness and respect to enable effective research collaborations based on mutual trust, with a commitment to broader struggles to advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice. We help students understand the need for cultural and intellectual humility and value and appreciate the strengths and expertise of the communities and organizations with which we partner.

The curriculum provides social work students with rigorous training in social work theory, qualitative and quantitative research methodology, and statistics to address contemporary issues associated with social work practice or social welfare policy at all levels. The program requires students to apply concepts to develop mastery of specialized content areas, and the completion of a dissertation.

The program offers:
- Opportunities for professional and intellectual growth.
- Advanced training that enables graduates to assume positions of leadership in the social work profession locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Service-oriented faculty and staff who provide personalized advisement and support geared toward maximizing degree completion and success.
- An intimate environment that combines personalized attention with the resources of a large university.
- Diversity among faculty, staff, and students, supports development of relationships across a variety of cultural, religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.
- Opportunities to engage in mutually beneficial collaborations in the Dallas-Fort Worth community.

ADMISSION TO THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

For information on admission requirements see https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/social-work/admissions/Ph.D.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Ph.D. program has awarded over 180 doctoral degrees. Our graduates teach and conduct research in universities across the United States and in countries around the world. The Ph.D. program aims to admit around eight qualified applicants each Fall term. Students come to UTA from around the world and study in a variety of Social Work areas including child welfare, health and health disparities, violence and prevention, aging, mental health, substance misuse, community and administrative practice, and international social work.

The Ph.D. program is only offered in a full-time, in-person format. Part-time and online enrollment options are not available. During the first year of the program, students complete foundation courses on research, statistics, theory, and policy. In the second year of the full-time program, students take advanced classes, including research, statistics, and grant writing, as well as developing an area of specialization through elective courses inside and outside the School of Social Work.

Throughout the program, students can serve as graduate teaching assistants (GTA) and graduate research assistants (GRA) to gain hands-on experience. Students working as GRAs work closely with faculty members on

scholarly activities including conference presentations, journal publications, and grant applications. Depending on qualifications and practice experience, students can teach BSW or MSW classes in the School of Social Work across different platforms including online, face-to-face- and hybrid courses in research, theory, policy, and practice. As a research focused degree program, students are expected to focus on GRA experiences, though GTA experiences will be provided based on student preparation, career goals, and departmental needs.

BEFORE STARTING THE PH.D. PROGRAM

MSW Degree and Prior Experience

Students are expected to have earned an MSW or MSSW prior to admission to the Ph.D. Program, or in rare circumstances a closely related masters degree. Two years of post-MSW practice experience is required to teach practice courses (micro and macro) in undergraduate and graduate programs accredited by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE). These requirements do not apply to individuals teaching policy, research, and human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) courses. It is important to know that most universities give preference to job applicants who have at least post-MSW practice experience. To be competitive and to increase their marketability, Ph.D. program participants are strongly encouraged to obtain the MSW and two years of practice experience before seeking consideration for Ph.D. Program admission.

Statistics Preparation

All students entering the program are required to take a short statistics preparation before the start of the official program. The class offered by the Ph.D. program will take place the week before the beginning of the fall semester, without cost to the students. The purpose of this class is to assist incoming Ph.D. students to be prepared for the first statistics course in the program.

Time Considerations

Obtaining a Ph.D. requires a considerable time commitment. Students need to consider existing and anticipated obligations. Students are expected to be focused on the Ph.D. full time, and outside employment is discouraged. In circumstances where students seem unable to maintain the appropriate focus, the program director may ask to speak with them about alternatives.

- Students can expect a *minimum* of three years to complete the Ph.D. degree.
- Most students take four to five years to complete the Ph.D. degree. Funding should be taken into consideration if a student chooses or needs to enroll for more than four years. Students may apply for dissertation grants, or scholarships from the School of Social Work, the Graduate School, or external sources. Your mentors are also good sources of information on funding specific to your research area.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The information below provides a timeline and overview of the milestones of achieving the Ph.D. degree. More detailed information is available in later sections. The degree requirements are as follows:
- A minimum of six semesters (three years) of full-time study.
- The completion of a minimum of 48 credits of graduate study. There are five primary components to the Ph.D. degree:

Coursework

- 18 credits of foundation coursework.
- 12 credits of advanced coursework.
- 3 credits of electives selected from relevant graduate courses offered outside the School of Social Work, in another College.

- 3 credits of graduate level electives within or outside the School of Social Work. For those with an MSW, they may not take courses in the MSW program as an elective.

Initial Diagnostic Advisory Committee Assessment

- Upon completion of the 18 credits of foundation coursework, students' progress is evaluated by an Initial Diagnostic Advisory Committee and developmental feedback is provided, including the possibility of required remedial assignments or tasks to address identified areas for growth.

Comprehensive Specialty Examination

- Upon completion of 36 credits of required and elective coursework, students must complete and pass their comprehensive specialty examination.
- The comprehensive specialty examination is taken before application for degree candidacy and registration for dissertation.

Dissertation

- Dissertation tutorial (3 credits) taken upon successful completion of comprehensive specialty examination.
- Students develop and defend a dissertation proposal before beginning the dissertation research.
- Enroll in a minimum of 9 credits of dissertation credits.
- Students complete their dissertation with a formal, oral defense.

PH.D. PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The following is an approximate plan that gives an overview of courses required for completion of the Ph.D. program. During the first two years, students receive advanced training in social work theory, statistics, and research methodology. Students also complete at least six credits of coursework in a specialization associated with their area of research. At least three credits of these elective classes or independent study credits must be taken in a complementary discipline (e.g., psychology, sociology, education, health, statistics). With the doctoral director's approval, the timing of exams can vary from the outlined plan. Students are strongly encouraged to pass comprehensive exams and achieve candidacy status by the start of year 3. Once students have advanced to candidacy, they will complete the Dissertation Tutorial and a minimum of 9 dissertation credits.

Students should be aware that classes are not available every semester. Therefore, if students do not complete courses according to the recommended plan, they should consult the course planning guide available on the Ph.D. Canvas page and consult with the Ph.D. Program Director to develop alternative plans based on upcoming course availability. The distribution of degree requirements is as follows:

Theory (3 credits)

SOCW 6373 – Theory and Model Building in Social Work Research, 3 Credits

Policy (3 credits)

SOCW 6328 – Social Policy Research and Analysis, 3 Credits

Research Methods (9 credits)

SOCW 6340 – Advanced Research Methods in Human Services, 3 Credits
SOCW 6348 – Qualitative Research Methods, 3 Credits
SOCW 6395 – Mixed Methods Research, 3 Credits

Statistics (9 credits)

> SOCW 6347 – Intermediate Statistics, 3 Credits
> SOCW 6341 – Advanced Statistical Methods in Human Services, 3 Credits
> SOCW 6367 – Seminar in Advanced Statistical Applications, 3 Credits

Other Required Courses (6 credits)

> SOCW 6396 – Social Work Education: Principles and Skills, 3 Credits
> SOCW 6393 – Grant Writing, 3 Credits

Elective Courses (6 credits)

All students in the doctoral program are required to take two elective courses. At least one of these electives must be taken outside the School of Social Work.

Dissertation Credits (at least 15 credits)

> SOCW 639X – Dissertation Tutorial, 3 Credits
> A total of 9 credits from any of the following:
> > SOCW 6399 – Dissertation Credits, 3 Credits
> > SOCW 6699 – Dissertation Credits, 6 Credits
> > SOCW 6999 – Dissertation Credits, 9 Credits
> SOCW 7399 – Dissertation Completion, 3 Credits

ELECTIVES AND INDEPENDENT STUDY

Students may enroll either in courses or independent study credits with a faculty member. These courses should be related to the student's focused research which will add depth or breadth to the student's knowledge level and expertise, either in a substantive area or a research method related to the intended dissertation research. The student mentors and Ph.D. Program Director can advise the student in the selection of the elective courses, if needed. The following considerations should be noted:
- Students should consult with their mentors on outside elective course selection. The Ph.D. Program Director will review and approve outside course enrollments.
- When deemed appropriate, the Ph.D. Program Director may permit students to take one of the outside elective courses at another university. Permission will only be granted for courses that are not offered by UTA. Please note that students must pay for coursework taken outside of UTA.

MASTERS LEVEL COURSES AS ELECTIVES

Ph.D. students may enroll in master's level courses if approved by their Diagnostic Advisory Committee and the Ph.D. Program Director. A master's level course may be considered if, in consultation with the instructor, additional depth and breadth of knowledge will be attained through additional or enhanced assignments.
- Ph.D. students should identify themselves to the course instructor to discuss extra requirements for doctoral students that may be required.
- Courses must be taught by a Ph.D. level instructor.
- Master's level courses must be outside of the School of Social Work

INDEPENDENT STUDIES

An independent study is a mentored learning experience between a student and faculty member. The student does not attend class on a formal basis, but instead works with an individual professor on a specified project related to a subject of interest. An independent study may be for one, two, or three credits. The faculty advisor must be a full-time faculty member at the University, but does not necessarily need to be a full member of the

Graduate Faculty. The plans for the independent study must be approved by the PhD Program Director prior to enrollment.

- Independent study may be approved for areas of interest not covered by courses scheduled at the time the student is completing course requirements.
- A maximum of 6 credits of independent study may be applied to degree completion requirements.
- A written syllabus outlining the plan of work must be submitted by the student and approved by the Ph.D. Program Director prior to enrolling in the course. A syllabus template is provided on Canvas.
- Written evidence of approval from the Ph.D. Program Director must be presented during advisement prior to the start of the semester.

ADVISING AND MENTORSHIP

Doctoral students structure their coursework in terms of a domain of knowledge within the discipline of social work. Early in the program, the doctoral student, with the assistance of the Ph.D. Program Director and other mentors, plans a sequence of studies and required milestones.

ACADEMIC ADVISING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ph.D. Program Director is the academic advisor for the Ph.D. Program. In this role, the program director will assist students in understanding the expectations of the program, facilitate connections with potential faculty mentors, and support students as they navigate the milestones of the program. The Milestone Agreement is completed during the first semester in the Ph.D. Program. This should be drafted, in collaboration with mentors and the Ph.D. Program Director, and submitted to the Ph.D. Program Director and Administrative Assistant by the start of the Spring semester.

The Milestone Agreement will be revised and resubmitted to the Ph.D. Program Director as part of the annual review process each year. The annual review is designed to be a formative process in which course instructors, supervisors, and mentors review progress to support in the development of plans to promote academic and professional development to support students' future career goals. Annual reviews are for students in years 2 and above and occur in early Spring semester each year. An outline will be provided in which students will reflect on their experiences in the past year and identify goals and desired supports for the upcoming year.

PH.D. DIAGNOSTIC ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Diagnostic Advisory Committees and Ph.D. Program Director review student progress annually to offer mentorship, provide support for student success, and identify goals for ongoing education. The Initial Diagnostic Advisory Committee is three faculty volunteers selected from course instructors for first year classes that year and faculty members of the SCOGS-PhD Committee. The Ph.D. Diagnostic Advisory Committee and Dissertation Committee are comprised of faculty selected by the student.

INITIAL DIAGNOSTIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

After completion of first year core courses (18 credits), students are evaluated by an Initial Ph.D. Diagnostic Advisory Committee comprised three faculty volunteers selected from course instructors for 1st year classes that year and faculty members of the SCOGS-PhD Committee, with input from other mentors and supervisors. Below is an overview of the composition and roles:

- The Diagnostic Advisory Committee consists of at least 3 graduate faculty members within the School of Social Work who taught courses in the first year of the program or are members of the Ph.D. Program Committee.

- Academic mentors and GRA supervisors will provide feedback to the committee as part of the holistic assessment.
- The PH.D. Program Director chairs the committee.
- The Diagnostic Advisory Committee reviews each student's progress during the student's first year of doctoral program work. The PhD Program Director meets with students at the end of the review process to provide formative feedback and also assists students in selecting goals for the upcoming year of their Ph.D. program.

There are four potential outcomes to the diagnostic evaluation.
- Approval to continue in the doctoral program.
- Approval to continue with specified remedial work.
- Failure with permission for assessment through a second diagnostic evaluation (See information on the Core Qualifying Exam below).
- Failure and termination in the program.

The result of the diagnostic evaluation is filed with the Office of Graduate Studies by the Ph.D. Program Director.

PH.D. DIAGNOSTIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (COMPREHENSIVE EXAM COMMITTEE)

Upon completion of first 1½ years of course work (27 credits), students develop their own Ph.D. Diagnostic Advisory Committee. This Diagnostic Advisory Committee will continue to review the student's progress in the program annually, provide mentorship and support, and assist in goal setting through the completion of the Ph.D. program.
- In consultation with the Ph.D. Program Director, students will select a Chair.
- In consultation with the Chair, student selects at least three faculty members to serve on their Ph.D. Diagnostic Committee.
- Members of the committee should reflect the student's primary area of concentration and the student's specialty area. The area of concentration is determined by the student and can be any issue or population related to Social Work policy, practice, or education.
- One member may be "at-large" and not represent an identified area of concentration or specialty area.
- The Ph.D. Diagnostic Advisory Committee (minus the outside member) will develop and evaluate the Comprehensive Specialty Exam.
- Members of the diagnostic committee generally serve in that capacity until the student has passed the Comprehensive Specialty Exam and select a dissertation committee.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

At the time the student has passed the Comprehensive Specialty Exam, the student selects a Dissertation Chair in consultation with the Ph.D. Program Director. Students and their Chair will then select a Dissertation Committee consisting of members from the student's primary area of research and with expertise in the proposed research methodological approaches. The dissertation committee may include members of the Diagnostic Advisory Committee, but this is not required. More information on the composition and function of the dissertation is provided in a later section.

ADVISORS AND MENTORS

The Ph.D. Program Director is the primary academic advisor for doctoral students. The PhD Program Coordinator serves as the advisor for enrollment and other student needs. In addition, the Ph.D. Program Director matches each student with an initial faculty mentor prior to their start in the program. The mentor provides support and guidance to the student through departmental and university requirements until the student selects a Chair for

the Comprehensive Specialty, and later the Dissertation Chair. These Chairs then support the academic and professional mentorship until degree completion.

Students may change mentors and advisors at any time in the program, though changes to the Chair or membership of exam or dissertation committee must be approved by the Ph.D. Program Director. If students wish to change advisors (Committee Chairs or members), the first step is to discuss the proposed change with the current advisor, followed by discussion with the Ph.D. Program Director.

Although all students are paired with initial mentors, students are encouraged to become acquainted with other faculty in the school and the university and to assume the responsibility of seeking new or additional learning opportunities or mentorship which may be of benefit to their academic and career goals. Seeking mentorship from multiple members of the faculty and staff is highly recommended.

EXPECTATIONS OF MENTORS AND ADVISORS

The Ph.D. Program Director should meet with the student each semester of the first year to review progress through the Ph.D. Program. In addition, each Ph.D. student should have at least one discussion with their faculty mentor per semester, at which the student's academic progress and goals are discussed. This review ensures that every student benefits from regular monitoring of progress toward the degree and receives appropriate support to achieve academic and professional goals.

The Milestone Agreement and Self-Assessment and Feedback Form help to facilitate this process by encouraging self-assessment by the student and engaging in planning and goal setting. The mentors and Ph.D. Program Director can also provide support and resources for professional development opportunities across the university and within the School of Social Work. A mentor and advisor can be expected to:

- help to develop a research and professionalization plan with well-defined goals and timelines.
- strive to maintain a relationship that is based on trust and mutual respect.
- provide respect to individuals without regard to gender, race, nationality, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression.
- promote an academic, research, and professional environment that is safe and free from harassment.
- promote professional and ethical standards for research (including legal regulations) in all interactions.
- help navigate the institutional and policy requirements of the degree.
- respond promptly to requests for assistance and support.
- make themself available regularly for in-person appointments on campus.
- read and evaluate papers, oral presentations, and other scholarly work in a timely manner prior to public dissemination.
- ensure that joint credit for any collaborative work is apportioned relative to the work done.
- help gain access to other faculty and departmental/institutional resources needed to complete work.
- advise about opportunities that are pertinent and useful, as well as counsel when opportunities are ill-advised or detrimental.
- communicate about pertinent fellowships, jobs, conferences, and other relevant opportunities.
- recognize that personal, social, and financial commitments of the student are normal and natural and will help minimize their effect on student progress.
- regularly communicate with regarding progress towards the degree.
- be aware of and receptive to the many potential career paths after graduation.
- celebrate successes and achievements within the program.
- support the student as a colleague and provide mentorship as they transition to the next career stage.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

The student holds primary responsibility for monitoring their own progress, accessing needing resources, and seeking support to address challenges. In addition to successfully completing coursework, exams, and the dissertation, the process of earning a Ph.D. requires engaging in opportunities and experience outside the curriculum, such as engaging in professional development opportunities, attending School events such as job talks, presenting research at professional conferences such as Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) and Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), publishing research in journal articles, and engaging with School, University, or local committees or community service. A student can be expected to:

- acknowledge their primary responsibility for developing their own career.
- recognize that other commitments (personal, social, financial, etc.) are normal and natural, and strive to minimize their effect on progress towards the degree, when possible.
- work with the mentor to develop a research and professional plan, including specific goals and timelines.
- engage with mentors and peers with mutual respect and collegiality, to promote an environment that is safe and free from harassment.
- make themself aware of any regulations, policies, and processes pertaining to the degree.
- promptly complete required forms, applications, and other required aspects of the degree.
- discuss course selections well in advance of each academic term.
- communicate promptly and regularly regarding their progress.
- endeavor to attend workshops, colloquia, talks, etc., pertinent to their research interests.
- discuss other faculty with whom they hope to collaborate or who might serve as mentors for their work.
- discuss any peer-reviewed papers or scholarly conferences prior to submission or presentation.
- participate in professional societies as appropriate to their position.
- respect all ethical and legal standards relevant to their position and profession.
- seek information on relevant fellowships, jobs, conferences, and other professional opportunities.
- discuss any concerns or problems that may affect performance or progress toward the degree.
- assume progressive responsibility for their research as it matures throughout time in the degree.
- communicate with the mentor regarding my career goals and professional plans.
- expect intellectual excellence of themself.
- acknowledge that they represent themself, advisor or mentor, the department, and UTA in degree-related and scholarship activities.

BENCHMARKS FOR PROGRESSION THROUGH THE PH.D. PROGRAM

Progression through the Ph.D. Program involves multiple steps. The list below provides a general outline of this process. Please consult the School of Social Work and Graduate School websites for more information.
- Students are matched with faculty and peer mentors in the summer prior to enrollment in the program.
- Students participate in all required orientation programs prior to the start of the first semester of enrollment.
- Mentors and students meet at least once each semester to identify goals, support understanding of the progression through the program, and offer resources necessary to promote achievement of goals.
- The milestone agreement should be completed within the first semester of enrollment.
- Students submit a written annual review to the Ph.D. Program Director, as described above. The review is required to assess student progress and identify goals for the upcoming year.
- The Diagnostic Assessment is completed following completion of the foundational courses; typically, during the summer following the first year.

- Coursework should be completed by the end of the second year in the program.
- The Comprehensive Specialty Exam is taken following completion of all coursework. The exam committee should be selected in the semester the student is expected to complete coursework.
- Defense of the dissertation proposal should be completed within one year of advancing to candidacy.
- Oral defense of the dissertation should be completed within four years of advancing to candidacy.
- All degree requirements must be completed within four years of starting the program.

The program and university require multiple forms to document stages through the process of the Ph.D. Program. Please be aware that required forms and paperwork tend to change over time and even mid-year. The Ph.D. Program Office will keep students updated on changes and update the Ph.D. Program Manual as needed. However, students are encouraged to verify with the websites or Ph.D. Program Office.

ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Annual Review is designed to provide support and mentorship to students to reflect on their own progress, and seek support, mentorship, and resources to achieve their future goals. The Director of the Doctoral Program, in collaboration with class instructors, committee chairs, and supervisors, reviews student progress annually to offer support and mentorship. The Annual Review includes three parts that are updated at least annually. All forms are available on the Canvas site for the Ph.D. Program.

- Milestone Agreement Form
- UTA CV
- Self-Assessment and Feedback Form

The Milestone Agreement Form is a requirement of the Graduate School to track the student's progress through the milestones of the program, such as exams and stages of the dissertation. In the first year in the program, the student identifies anticipated dates of completion for each milestone. This form is updated annually for changes in plans and actual completion of milestones, signed by the student and mentor, and then submitted to the Ph.D. Program Director and Administrative Assistant.

The UTA CV is a template for collecting and organizing teaching, publications, presentations, service, and professional development, as well as awards and accomplishments in one centralized place. The template organizes the needed information in a standardized way for all students and should be shared with the mentor and Ph.D. Program Director during the annual review. The information from this document is also useful when selecting students to nominate for university and national awards, assisting mentors in writing letters of recommendation, and eventually, editing for marketing materials when the student is on the job market. Ideally, this should be updated throughout the year. Please note, you are welcome to keep a CV in any format you wish for your own purposes, but the UTA CV Template must be used for the annual review.

The Self-Assessment and Feedback Form includes self-reflective statements of goals for the upcoming year. The goal is to identify an action plan to support the student, not only in successful progression through the Ph.D. Program, but also toward their professional and career goals. The student completes this self-assessment by January 31st of each year. The student then meets to discuss this document, the Milestone Agreement, and CV with one to two mentors who assist the student in making revisions and provide written feedback. These documents are then shared with the Ph.D. Program Director by March 1st each year.

REQUIRED FORMS

Whenever submitting any form, please send them to both the Ph.D. Program Director and the Administrative Assistant in the Office for Research and Faculty Affairs. Below is a list of the primary forms that will be needed as you progress through the program:

- **University Honor Code and NASW Code of Ethics** – Reviewed and signed as part of orientation.

- **Milestone Agreement** – Completed in the first semester in the program in consultation with the mentor and Ph.D. Program Director. Updated annually as part of the Annual Review Process.
- **Self-Assessment and Feedback Form –** Submitted annually as part of the Annual Review Process.
- **Diagnostic Evaluation Report** – Completed following the Diagnostic Assessment.
- **Comprehensive Examination Report** – Completed following the Comprehensive Specialty Exam
- **Approval of Dissertation Committee** – Completed at the time the dissertation committee is formed and whenever a member is removed or added.
- **Dissertation Proposal Defense Form** – this form is signed by the members of your committee and saved in your student record.
- **Dissertation Defense Report** – completed following the dissertation defense and filed with the Graduate School.
- **Leave of Absence** – a student may request a leave of absence from the Ph.D. program for medical or other reasons.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The UTA SSW explicitly identifies the following policies, procedures and guidelines which are considered to represent the conviction that students' rights and responsibilities form a cornerstone for graduate social work education. Students' efforts to gain and disseminate knowledge are protected as a fundamental right. Students will not be prohibited from exercising their rights to Constitutional and lawful activity. This expressly includes freedom of speech and dissent.

MEMBERSHIP

The School recognizes and supports the right of students to organize in their interests as students. The School provides for student membership on all standing committees (except for the Committee on Retention, Tenure and Promotion and the Academic Hearing and Professional Standards Committee). University regulations preclude students having voting rights on the Committee on Graduate Studies but on all other committees, full and meaningful participation is expected. Representation on committees currently is authorized for student members according to the SSW Bylaws.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

No person shall, on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual or gender identity, disability, or veteran status, be denied employment or admission, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity which the School sponsors or conducts. The University shall not tolerate any behavior or verbal or physical conduct by any administrator, supervisor, and faculty or staff member, which constitutes harassment or discrimination. Any student that believes discrimination has occurred should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity Services.

STUDENT FILES AND PRIVACY

Student records are stored electronically on secure servers to protect student privacy. Students may have access to their records by submitting an email request to the Ph.D. Program Director. Students have a right to request amendments to their education records to ensure that they are not inaccurate or misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Students may also file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the University to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

Students have a right to consent to disclosure of the student's education records to third parties, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. Faculty and staff members of the University have access to student educational records only as necessary in performance of regular duties. Another person may not see a student's record unless the student gives written permission. The School may confirm that a student (or graduate) is enrolled in school (or has graduated), but requests for additional information will be honored only at the request of the student (or graduate) unless the inquiring agency has provided a stipend with this stipulation for the student.

STUDENT SAFETY

Students have a right to an educational environment that promotes physical and psychological safety. The University is committed to working to prevent and respond in a timely manner to acts that interfere with student safety. In addition, the University publishes a Security and Fire Safety Report in accordance with federal regulations. The Report is available for review and includes crime statistics for the prior three calendar years. These statistics include crimes that occurred on campus, in non-campus properties owned or controlled by UTA and frequented by students, and on public property within or immediately adjacent to campus. The Report also includes information on fire statistics for campus residential properties for the prior three calendar years and current fire safety systems in these properties. In addition, the Report includes UTA policies related to the safety and security of our campus community. You may access the Annual Campus Security and Fire Safety Report online.

Students have access to a variety of services related to violence prevention and campus safety. These include, but are not limited to:
- Late Night Security Escort - https://www.uta.edu/pats/transportation/late-night-security-escort.php
- UTA Police Department - https://www.uta.edu/campus-ops/police
- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response - https://www.uta.edu/campus-ops/police/crime-prevention/sexual-assault-prevention-rad
- Sexual Violence or Harassment and Intimate Partner Violence - https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/rvsp/resources
- Harassment and Discrimination - https://www.uta.edu/eos-title-ix/title-ix
- Active Shooter - https://www.uta.edu/campus-ops/police/crime-prevention/active-shooter-threat-resources
- UTA Counseling and Psychological Services - https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/caps
- Crime Victim Services - https://www.uta.edu/campus-ops/police/services/crime-victim-services
- Other on and off campus resources - https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/gradschool/resources/wellness
- Crisis Services - https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/rvsp https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/caps/crisis

STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

UT Arlington is committed to addressing student complaints in a fair, consistent, and professional manner. In attempting to resolve a complaint, the student must first make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the individual with whom the grievance originated. Non-academic complaints are filed initially with the Ph.D. Program Director, then may be filed with the Dean of the School of Social Work and then the Dean of Students office.

EXCEPTIONS TO GRADUATE POLICY

A student may petition for exceptions to published graduate policy by submitting a petition. The Ph.D. Program Director and the departmental Committee on Graduate Studies will evaluate the petition and send it to the Dean for final decision. Limited exceptions to some rules may be approved if the facts presented by the petitioner are fully justified in the views of the Ph.D. Program Director, Committee on Graduate Studies, and Dean. See Petition for an Exception to a Graduate Policy for additional information about petitioning for an exception to graduate policy.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The following academic and professional standards for the Ph.D. Program are based upon policies of the School of Social Work and the Graduate School at UTA. Please note that the following information is a summary of the more detailed policies provided by the Graduate School.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The professional standards for the Ph.D. Program are based upon policies of the School of Social Work and the National Association of Social Workers. Information about the rules of conduct and due process for disciplinary procedures is published in the Rules and Regulations of The Board of Regents of The University of Texas System and the Handbook of Operating Procedures of the University of Texas at Arlington, copies of which are in the Offices of the Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the School of Social Work. Information is also published in the University of Texas at Arlington Student Handbook and the Professional Standards Policies and Procedures of the School of Social Work.

Students are expected to adhere to these professional standards on campus and in all other settings in which they are acting and student or professional. This includes while attending professional conferences and when engaging with community research partners.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A high standard of student conduct plays a major role in creating an environment of excellence. The Student Code of Conduct maintains these high standards. The code (1) establishes the expectations that students are accountable for their behavior; (2) describes acceptable student conduct, both academic and non-academic; (3) describes disciplinary policies and procedures; (4) specifies the rights of the student and other parties; (5) specifies prohibited conduct and sanctions to be imposed if such conduct occurs.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty means any activity compromises the academic integrity of the institution or subverts the education process. Examples of academic dishonesty include plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, unethical use of AI, or furnishing false information.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE

In some cases, uses of generative AI may support scholarly activities and help facilitate research. However, these technologies hold some risks and must be used judiciously. Therefore, using generative AI tools to support research and writing must always take place with full transparency. This includes transparency between students, instructors, supervisors, and mentors, who must agree in advance how any generative AI tools will be used. When instructors, supervisors, and committees approve student use of generative AI in any aspect of producing a written product, it must be clear how the student's versus the AI tool's contributions will be

identified to accurately assess the work of the student in achieving the expectations of the assignment. Further, transparency between students and the audience of their work is required, including a clear and complete description and citation of any use of generative AI tools in creating any published or presented work.

It is also important to be aware of the limitations of AI in writing manuscripts and assignments as these tools often generate writing with inaccuracies and fail to provide accurate and appropriate citations. As such, their use in the generation of initial drafts of papers and manuscripts may be considered fabrication of research. Instead, AI is best use to refine language or brainstorming ideas. **Always cross-reference AI material with empirical sources.**

Further complexities emerge in use of generative AI in the analysis of qualitative or quantitative data. Privacy concerns have been raised related to data processing to train generative AI tools. Therefore, in most cases, generative AI should not be used in the analysis of data due to human subject privacy and confidentiality protections. However, data that is considered public information may be reviewed by the IRB for approval and assessment of privacy protections of the specific AI tool, if supported by the supervisor or committee.

The UTA School of Social Work Language-Based Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy is as follows:

Policy Overview

1. Before utilizing AI tools for any assignment, check with your instructor.

2. Always cite AI sources l using guidelines suggested by APA (https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt).

Policy Details

Recently there has been an explosion of AI software tools that you may wish to use to inform or improve your academic work. Some common AI tools include *ChatGPT, Scite, Google Bard, Grammarly, Microsoft Open AI, Kindo AI,* and *Copy.ai*. However, to use these tools responsibility, students, faculty and administrators all need to be aware of when and how these tools should or should not be used. In most instances, the use of AI on assignments negatively impacts faculty members' ability to accurately assess your learning and may prevent you from developing the competencies you will need to be an effective and ethical social work professional. Moreover, AI may generate responses with inaccuracies or fail to provide appropriate and/or accurate citations.

This statement should serve as a guideline, rather than an exhaustive list, of ways that AI may be used responsibly by students. **If you are unsure if it is appropriate or allowed to use an AI tool coursework, please contact your instructor prior to starting to work on the assignment.** *All work you submit must be your own original writing. Generally, information from outside sources (including books, websites, and apps) must be summarized in your own words and cited, but text-based responses from generative AI prompts should be reported verbatim (cite https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt here if needed).* Failure to follow this policy may result in a referral to the Office of Community Standards (conduct@uta.edu) for an Honor Code violation, which may result in disciplinary consequences including but not limited to academic probation, suspension or dismissal from the program.

Examples where AI may be used with instructor permission:

1. Refining the language or improving grammar and sentence structure of a final draft of a paper or manuscript after it has been written and appropriately cited by you without the help of AI.

2. Simplifying language to be used in a consent form for an IRB application to make sure the language is at an appropriate reading level for your participants.

3. Helping to generate ideas for a paper, a research project or for a role play (AI brainstorming).

4. Creation of graphics or unique images for a flyer or advertisement or social media post.

5. Clarification of a concept to better understand it while cross referencing what you learn with empirical sources.

Examples where AI should not be used:

1. Writing discussion boards posts or responses

2. Writing reflection/reaction posts or papers

3. Writing initial drafts of manuscripts or papers

4. Collection and/or analysis of human subjects' data

5. To search for answers to a test or quiz

If you use AI *in any way* for *any part of an assignment*, you must include a statement with the work you submit indicating which AI tool was used and the ways in which you used it. It is up to the individual instructor what this statement should include. This may include the original chat input/output in the appendix of your assignment.

Example submission comment:

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s) and link] to [specific use of generative artificial intelligence]. The prompts used include [list of prompts]. The output from these prompts was used to [explain use].

Additionally, be sure to cite any AI sources you use just like you would source a journal or book. More resources concerning the ethical use of AI and ways to improve your professional and academic writing can be found below.

UTA Statement of AI in Education - https://www.uta.edu/administration/crtle/initiatives/ai-in-education

UTA Writing Center - https://uta.mywconline.com/

UTA SSW Connections Tutoring Lab - https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/UTASSWConnectionsLab@mavs.uta.edu/bookings/

Purdue APA Online Writing Lab (OWL) - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

APA citation - https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt

Academic Integrity Office of Community Standards - https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/academic-integrity

STUDENT DUE PROCESS

A student's rights to due process are protected in the School of Social Work Professional Standards Policies and Procedures and the UTA Policies and Procedures Manual. All allegations are investigated, first at the level of the School, then the University. The investigation is intended to provide for the reasonable gathering of reliable and relevant facts. It is intended to be thorough, prompt, impartial, and respectful of the individuals involved. Should the investigation proceed to hearing, the student must be notified promptly and provided the opportunity to respond and present additional evidence. Appeals of decisions by the School of Social Work's Professional Standards Committee can be made to the Dean of the School of Social Work, then to the Office of Student Conduct, and then finally to the Vice President of Student Affairs.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA) REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to maintain an overall 3.0 grade point average (GPA) to remain in good standing in the Ph.D. program. The overall GPA is cumulative across semesters of enrollment in the Ph.D. Program. Students who do not maintain an overall 3.0 GPA will be placed on academic probation and will be required to raise their GPA by the conclusion of the next semester. Students who do not meet this standard by the conclusion of the next semester will be dismissed from the Ph.D. Program.

Students are required to maintain an overall 3.2 GPA to be eligible for funding support and Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) and Teaching Assistantships (TA).

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A student may request a leave of absence from the requirement of continuous enrollment due to circumstances that prevent a student from participating in the required activities of the PhD Program. A student who is considering a leave of absence should discuss the options as soon as possible with a faculty mentor and the PhD Program Director. A request for a leave must be approved by the graduate school, so the request form should be filed as early as possible. The university policy on taking a leave of absence can be found at https://catalog.uta.edu/academicregulations/registration/#graduatetext.

COURSE CREDIT

Only courses completed with a grade of C or higher can satisfy degree requirements. A student with a grade of D or F must repeat the course. Both the original grade and repeated course grade will be counted toward the student's overall GPA. Ph.D. courses are not eligible for the Pass/Fail grading option.

GRADES

In general, students in the Ph.D. Program are expected to earn As and Bs in all their courses. Although a C grade is considered passing, it is not indicative of mastery and will have a negative impact on the overall GPA. More information on grading policies are available on the Graduate School website.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

A graduate student unable to complete all assigned work in a class in the term in which it was taken may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive an Incomplete (I) grade. This grade is not given automatically when a student does not complete all assigned work. It is the responsibility of the student to arrange with the instructor to secure an incomplete grade of I before the term ends. To qualify for an incomplete, the student should have passing grades in 2/3 of assigned work, but, because of extenuating circumstances, cannot complete all the course work by the end of the semester. The grade of I will remain part of the student's academic record until the work is completed and a final grade awarded. All Incomplete grades must be resolved prior to the start of the next semester to continue in coursework.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES RELATED TO GRADES

It is the student's first obligation first to attempt to resolve the matter with the faculty member with whom the grievance originated. The student has one calendar year from the date the grade is assigned to initiate an official grievance. Students who wish to appeal a grade should contact the Ph.D. Program Director for more information on the process. The appeal will initially be reviewed by a committee of faculty. If the student does not find the committee's decision acceptable, the student may appeal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Information regarding grievances for matters other than grades is available above and in the [Student Rights](#) section of the Graduate School website.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

In addition to passing coursework, students must achieve two milestones as they progress through the Ph.D. program. The first, the Diagnostic Qualifying Assessment (sometimes called the Diagnostic Exam), is typically completed at the end of the first two semesters. The second, the Comprehensive Specialty Exam, is typically completed at the end of four semesters in the program. Students are advised to confer with their advisor and Ph.D. Program Director throughout their coursework about their personal progress towards the qualifying examinations.

These examinations are an opportunity for students to demonstrate the breadth, depth and mastery of their theoretical and empirical knowledge related to social work theory, research methods, and statistics, as well as their substantive domain of knowledge. Mastery is defined as the integration, synthesis, and communication of knowledge within the field of social work generally, as well as within a particular area of study. By the end of the process, students will be well grounded in their knowledge of the field of social work, as well as in their substantive area of research, and demonstrate an independent and original perspective regarding inquiry into social work practice and/or social welfare policy.

DIAGNOSTIC QUALIFYING ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE

The diagnostic qualifying assessment is intended to evaluate a student's expertise and ability to integrate social work knowledge and apply material covered in the first-year curriculum of the Ph.D. program. It provides information to assess student progress through the first stages of the Ph.D. Program.

POLICIES, PROCESS, AND FORMAT

The assessment is completed following completion of the first 18 credits of required coursework (end of 2nd semester). The assessment is completed by the instructors of the courses in the first year and the supervisors of Graduate Research Assistants. Students may also elect to have other mentors participate in the assessment process.

- Diagnostic Evaluation Review Form is completed at the end of each semester by:
    - Ph.D. course professors to identify competencies for each of the four content areas (Theory, Qualitative Methods, Quantitative Methods, Statistics)
    - GRA Supervisors
    - Other faculty mentors and advisors
- Diagnostic Assessment Committee is comprised of three faculty volunteers selected from course instructors for first year classes that year and faculty members of the SCOGS-PhD Program Committee.
- Initial Diagnostic Committee discusses materials as part of a holistic review of student academic and professional development. The committee will:
    - Determine results of diagnostic evaluation
    - Compile a summary of feedback for the student
    - Sign the UTA Diagnostic Evaluation Form
- Each student meets with the Ph.D. Program Director to review the outcome of the assessment and set goals for the upcoming year.

Students who do not pass any part of the qualifying examination will be provided with remedial activities that must be completed and the time frame in which they must be completed. This could include such things as revision of coursework or continued training in a content area through coursework or GRA assignments. The dates for the revision will be determined by the committee. Students should seek clarification on the assessment and timeframe of the remedial work. Students who do not meet the requirements will not continue in the program.

The Diagnostic Evaluation Report form is completed based on the Diagnostic Assessment, signed by all graders, the student, and Ph.D. Program Director, and submitted to the Graduate School. A copy is provided to the student for their records.

COMPREHENSIVE (SPECIALTY) EXAM

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Comprehensive Exam is to provide an opportunity to demonstrate expertise, integrate social work knowledge, and independently conceptualize an area specific to their academic interests. The final product from this exam may be a paper that contributes substantially to the dissertation, such as a literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, or testing of an instrument or measure. The goal is for this process to support the student in moving toward the successful completion of the dissertation proposal.

POLICIES, PROCESS, AND FORMAT

The exam is taken following completion of all 36 credits of elective and required coursework (end of 4th semester). This is typically completed during the summer between the second and third year in the program. The process of taking the exam starts with the selection of the Ph.D. Diagnostic Advisory Committee during the semester in which the student is expected to complete 27 credits of coursework (typically the 3rd semester).

The Ph.D. Diagnostic Advisory Committee consists of three faculty members selected by the student. One member of the committee, selected by the student, will serve as Chair. The Chair must be a full-time, tenure track faculty member in Social Work. The remaining two members must also be full-time faculty members, but may, in some cases, be non-tenure track faculty. The members of the committee must be approved by the Ph.D. Program Director to ensure the composition complies with Graduate School policies.

The student and committee collaborate to determine the content area parameters, develop questions, or outline, and agree upon the start date of the exam. The process of the Comprehensive Specialty Exam is guided by the following policies:
- The student must have met with the committee to determine questions, set the start date, and requested the Comprehensive Examination Report form before the last day of the semester prior to the semester in which the exam will be completed.
- The student should complete the top section of the Comprehensive Examination Report form at least two weeks before the start of the exam and send it to the Ph.D. Program Director and Committee Chair.
- The student has 30 days to complete the writing of the exam. The exam should take the form of a paper which addresses the questions developed with the committee and should be at least 20 pages in length.
- The exam is graded by all committee members, each assigning a score of pass/no pass.
- Committee members provide feedback to the Chair who will compile the comments and share them with the student.

Students who do not pass the qualifying examination will have 30 days to revise and resubmit the exam, based on the feedback provided. Students should seek clarification on feedback and grading prior to beginning the revision of the exam. Students who do not pass in their *third* attempt will not continue in the program.

The Comprehensive Examination Report form is signed by all committee members, the student, and Ph.D. Program Director and submitted to the Graduate School. A copy is provided to the student for their records.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ON EXAMS

The comprehensive exam is designed to assess the student's ability to conduct independent scholarship and promote synthesis of learning. During exam periods, students are required to work independently, and are not allowed to consult with anyone, including faculty, tutors, editors, or other students, on the writing of the paper. Answers must be original work. Students must do their own writing on these exams, without support from other people or artificial intelligence (AI) generative software. Any material or concepts written by others should be properly cited, regardless of the source. Qualifying exam answers may be checked with plagiarism detection software or written sources, to ensure there is no plagiarism or excessive copying of students' prior work.

ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY

Students are considered to have advanced to candidacy upon successful completion of the Diagnostic Assessment and Comprehensive Exams and completion of all required and elective courses.

DISSERTATION

The dissertation is the capstone of the Ph.D. journey and serves as a starting place for the rest of your career in research. At the UTA School of Social Work, students may choose to use either a traditional, monograph format or a three-article format for their dissertation. For more information on these formats and for examples of dissertations, please see the UTA library website https://libraries.uta.edu/services/thesis-dissertation.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Upon passing the Comprehensive Specialty Examination, students select a Dissertation Chair in consultation with the Ph.D. Program Director. Students and their Chair then select a Dissertation Committee consisting of members from the student's primary area of research and with expertise in the proposed research methodological approaches. It is not required or expected that members of students' Diagnostic Advisory Committees serve on the Dissertation Committee.

COMPOSITION OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

- The Chair of the Dissertation Committee must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty at UTA.
- A student may elect to have two Co-Chairs, but this decision should be made with careful consideration. Five total committee members are required if a student elects to have co-chairs.
- The Dissertation Committee will be comprised of four to five total faculty members, including the chair.
- Faculty members serving on a dissertation committee who leave the UTA SSW by retirement or separation may remain serving as member of the committee for two years but cannot be considered as the "outside" committee member.
  - o The departing faculty member can be designated as a member or co-chair the committee but the primary chair must be a UTA faculty member.
  - o If a student has not graduated within two years, the departing faculty member would need to be approved by the Graduate School to continue serving on the committee as an external member.

- One member of the committee must be outside the School of Social Work, either from another discipline or another university. The outside committee member must have an affiliation with a university.
- One individual who is not a member of the graduate faculty may serve as a member of a dissertation committee if approved by the appropriate Ph.D. Subcommittee on Graduate Studies and approved by the Graduate Studies Office.

Once a student has determined the composition of their committee, they must complete the following forms to formalize the dissertation committee.

- All external members of the committee must be approved by the Graduate Dean using the Special or External Membership Nomination Form.
- The Approval of Dissertation Committee Form is signed by all members of the committee and returned to the Ph.D. Program Director and Administrative Assistant.

A student may change members of the committee if necessary or desired by the student or committee member. Any changes should be discussed with the Chair and the PhD Program Director. At the time of the change, the student should complete a new Approval of Dissertation Committee Form, signed by all members, and return it to the Ph.D. Program Director and Program Coordinator. If an external member is changed, the Special or External Membership Nomination Form must be completed and approved by the Graduate School Dean.

DISSERTATION CREDIT ENROLLMENT

DISSERTATION TUTORIAL

Students must enroll in the Dissertation Tutorial course (SOCW 6390 – 3 credits) upon completion of the Comprehensive Specialty Examination. The tutorial is individual-level work with the Dissertation Chair that focuses on the development of and preparation for the dissertation proposal and defense.

DISSERTATION CREDITS

Students may begin to enroll in dissertation credits once they have passed their Comprehensive Specialty Exam. Students are expected to enroll for a minimum of 3 credits per semester while working on their dissertation during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Students must complete a total of at least 9 credits of dissertation study prior to graduation (SOCW 6399, SOCW 6699, or SOCW 6999). The course number in which a student would enroll is dependent on the number of credits needed in that semester (SOCW 6399 = 3 credits, SOCW 6699 = 6 credits, and SOCW 6999 = 9 credits). It is not necessary for a student to enroll in each course, but any combination of these courses to equal at least 9 credits. More information on registration requirements can be found at https://catalog.uta.edu/academicregulations/degreerequirements/graduate/#doctoraltext.

Students may enroll in more than three credits as necessary for employment or visa requirements. Students are not required to enroll in dissertation credits during the summer unless they intend to graduate that semester. It is important to note the following:

- Students must be enrolled in at least 3 credits of dissertation in the semester in which they graduate. Certain employment and visa requirements may require enrollment in 6 or 9 credits per semester.
- Once enrolled in dissertation credits, continuous enrollment is required until completion of the dissertation.
- Dissertation credits are graded as an "R" (Research in Progress) and do not count towards the accumulation of credits.

DISSERTATION COMPLETION

In the semester the student will defend their dissertation, the candidate must enroll in Dissertation Completion for three credits (SOCW 7399). If the student intends to graduate in the summer, the student is required to be registered for the summer semester. If the completion and defense of the dissertation is delayed, the student must register for dissertation credits in the next semester, as described above.

DISSERTATION FORMAT OPTIONS

Two formats for dissertations are accepted in the School of Social Work at UTA. The traditional dissertation option is the canonical form of a dissertation. The traditional dissertation is comprised of four to six chapters, typically including an introduction, literature review, theoretical foundation, research methods, findings, and conclusions. The three-article dissertation option should result from a proposal for new research/scholarship, centered on a single research theme, formulated with the help of a committee, and approved at the proposal defense. It may not consist of previously published work by the student.

The student should work with the Dissertation Chair to determine the option that will be used for the dissertation prior to beginning the dissertation proposal. The format for the proposal and dissertation for each option are described in greater detail below.

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL & PROPOSAL DEFENSE

The dissertation proposal is the first step in finalizing your dissertation topic and beginning the writing of your dissertation. Students are encouraged to work closely with their Dissertation Chair and all members of their dissertation committee in preparation of their dissertation proposal.

The proposal consists of the following components:
- For a traditional dissertation, the first four chapters (introduction, literature review, theory, and proposed methods).
- For three-article dissertations, the proposal can follow one of two formats. It can follow the same format as a traditional proposal (introduction, literature review, theory, and proposed methods) and a plan delineating the focus of each of the 3 articles. The plan should specify which research questions/hypotheses will be addressed in each article. Alternatively, the proposal can contain a comprehensive introduction and separate discussions of literature and methods for each of the 3 articles.
- A list of proposed journals for submitting publications stemming from the dissertation.
- A timeline for completion of the work.
- A committee may choose to require the completed IRB forms be submitted as part of the proposal defense.

The dissertation proposal defense helps students to articulate their planned approach to the dissertation and identifies any issues the student may encounter as they move forward. The process for the dissertation proposal defense is as follows:
- The student and Chair of the dissertation committee collaborate to schedule a meeting with the dissertation committee for the proposal defense.
- Copies of the proposal are submitted to each member of the dissertation committee at least two weeks prior to the proposal defense date.
- All members must approve the proposal for the student to engage in the research process.
- The dissertation committee may convene additional meetings until it is satisfied with the dissertation proposal.

- A signed copy of the dissertation proposal approval form must be signed by the committee and returned to the Ph.D. Program Director.

IRB APPROVAL

Upon approval of the dissertation proposal, the student must apply to the UTA Office of Research for approval of the proposed research activities by the Institutional Review Board. Under no circumstances may data be collected for the proposed study prior to the defense and approval of the research proposal and receipt of approval by the IRB.

DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

Regardless of format, the dissertation should begin with an introduction explaining the study or studies and conclude with a summary explaining how the dissertation or three articles contribute to Social Work.

THE TRADITIONAL DISSERTATION OPTION

The traditional dissertation is comprised of four to six chapters, typically organized in the following structure:
- Introduction – described above.
- Literature Review - an extensive literature review which describes prior research in the area that forms the foundation, identifies gaps, and provides rationale for a research problem that is analyzed in subsequent chapters.
- Theoretical Foundation (may be separate or combined with the literature review and/or research methods) – examines the theory or theories that inform and guide the understating of the substantive area as well as the research methods employed.
- Methods – detailed discussion of all aspects of the research methods employed to collect and analyze quantitative or qualitative data. This section should also provide a detailed description of protections of human subjects and other research ethics.
- Findings – detailed description of all results of the analysis of the data.
- Discussion and Conclusions (one or two chapters) – typically includes a cohesive discussion of the results of the research, how they relate to existing understanding of the topic, and attempts to make meaning of the findings. This section should also explore the limitations of the research and provide suggestions for further research in the area. In addition, this section should explore the implications for Social Work practice.

THE THREE-ARTICLE DISSERTATION OPTION

The three-article dissertation option divides the work that would be included in a traditional dissertation into three publishable manuscripts. It is not expected that the three-article dissertation would necessitate three unique research projects, but instead, the dissemination of products from a single study. The three-article dissertation should result from a proposal for new research/scholarship, centered on a single research theme, formulated with the help of a committee, and approved at an oral defense. It cannot consist of previously published work by the student. Each manuscript should be suitable for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The scope and content of the three manuscripts should be agreed upon in consultation with the student's dissertation committee. Potential articles could include such things as a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods empirical study, a process paper, a scoping review, or a measurement study. There are no specific requirements of the content or research methods in any of these articles.

All three scholarly papers should represent work undertaken while the student is enrolled in the PhD program. In addition to the three manuscripts, the committee may elect to require summary documents that provide a comprehensive literature or theory review or that summarize the implications of the research when the three

manuscripts are considered collectively. More information on the three-article dissertation option is available on the Canvas site for the PhD Program.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE

The Chair and all dissertation committee members must read and approve the dissertation. Such approval includes all academic and professional evaluations and judgments as to originality, adequacy, significance, methodology, conclusions, and style. In general, all committee members should agree that the dissertation is likely to pass the defense prior to scheduling.

The dissertation defense is a formal, public presentation of the dissertation to the dissertation committee and other guests, including faculty, students, and members of the university. The proposal defense is open to the general university community and family and friends invited by the student. The defense may be conducted in person or through video conferencing. The following steps should be taken in preparation for the dissertation defense:

- The student, Dissertation Chair, and committee set a date for the defense based on agreement of all committee members that the dissertation is ready for defense. To be eligible to graduate, the defense typically must be held at least three to four weeks before the end of the semester. Time to complete revisions prior to the submission deadline should also be considered. Please consult the current graduate catalog for deadlines.
- Upon approval of the Chair, the student distributes a copy of the completed dissertation to each committee member one month before the projected defense date.
- At least three weeks before the defense date, the student and Chair should communicate the following information for the Ph.D. Program Director and Administrative Assistant.
    - Date and time of defense
    - Location of the defense. If in person, the room number of the defense should be included. If completely or partially online, the link to the scheduled meeting should be included.
    - Title of the dissertation.
    - Names of all committee members and confirmation of the date each received the dissertation. Dissertation defenses cannot be held if committee members have not received the dissertation by this time.
- For in person dissertations, committee members should make every attempt to attend the dissertation defense in person. Under certain circumstances, committee members may attend the dissertation defense remotely.
- All dissertation defenses are open to the public per UTA policy. Notifications of dissertation defenses are sent to students and faculty of the SSW and public notice of all defenses is posted at the SSW. Ph.D. students are invited and encouraged to attend the dissertation defenses of their colleagues.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE RESULTS

At the Public Defense of the dissertation the student will typically present a 30-35 minute synopsis of the theoretical framework, a review of the most important literature, the design of the study including appropriate instrumentation and analysis plans, the results, and a discussion of the implications. 25-30 minutes should be allowed for questions and discussion.

The Chair of the dissertation committee conducts the meeting. Following the presentation, it is typical to allow questions and comments from the audience. Following those questions, the committee will ask questions of the student. This may be done in a closed meeting or open to the audience. Once all questions are asked, the committee will discuss the results of the defense.

Following the defense, the student must complete the Dissertation Defense Form and obtain signatures from the Dissertation Chair, all committee members, and the Ph.D. Program Director. The dissertation defense may result in one of the four following:

- Pass unconditionally.
- Pass conditionally with specified revisions.
- Failed with permission to be re-examined after a specified period.
- Fail with dismissal from the program.

If the candidate successfully defends the dissertation, they must complete all additional administrative requirements in accordance with the Graduate School Catalog and the School of Social Work to graduate.

PUBLICATION PLANS

All dissertations must be submitted to UTA Library for inclusion in the UTA Research Commons. More information on Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) submission is available on the library website. All students must agree to the Intellectual Property Statement and Non-Exclusive Copyright Release. This Non-Exclusive Copyright Release ensures that the student retains the copywrite as author of their dissertation and associated manuscripts.

When submitting their dissertation to the UTA Research Commons, students should select the embargo for electronic publication. This is important as many journals require that the manuscript has not previously be published elsewhere. In rare cases, this may also be important if you are seeking a patent or copywrite on material related to the dissertation. The student may request an embargo of six months to two years.

AUTHORSHIP

The student is the sole author of the dissertation and retains all copywrite to the contents and findings. As such, the student should be first author on any resulting articles. Inclusion of mentoring faculty should follow ethical principles in which authorship is given relative to the contribution of the faculty member in conceptualizing and mentoring in writing. Authorship of articles resulting from the dissertation should be agreed upon before the manuscripts are written. If changes become necessary when contribution changes in the process of developing manuscripts, these changes should be discussed as early as possible.

GRADUATION

The university has multiple deadlines that are required to be met to graduate. Missing a deadline may mean that the student will not be considered graduated and must enroll in an additional semester of Dissertation Completion credits. In the semester the student intends to graduate, they must meet the required university deadlines:

- apply for graduation through MyMav.
- receive an unconditional pass on the dissertation defense.
- submit the Dissertation Defense Report with all required signatures.
- submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to the Library's ETD Coordinator and make any formatting revisions required.
- submit the Intellectual Property Statement

As dates and processes change frequently, please check with the graduate school prior to enrolling in Dissertation Completion credits.

STUDENT FUNDING AND EMPLOYMENT

For the first four years of enrollment, barring unforeseen budgetary issues, students are employed through the School of Social Work as Graduate Research Assistants and/or Graduate Teaching Assistants. Students may apply for dissertation grants, or scholarships from the School of Social Work, the Graduate School, or external sources. Your mentors are also good sources of information of funding specific to your research area.

Employment for students in the first four years is for 20 hours per week for the Fall and Spring, and either 10 or 20 in Summer semesters. Compensation includes the cost of tuition, health insurance, and a living stipend. Students may work either:

- Work 20 hours per week as a Graduate Research Assistant
- Teach two courses as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, or
- Work 10 hours per week as a Graduate Research Assistant and one course as a Graduate Teaching Assistant

Employment is available assuming satisfactory academic progress (a 3.0 GPA and successful completion of exams). For those employed with an assistantship, remember that academic progress is a priority. Also be aware that students that have a graduate teaching or research assistantship cannot hold additional employment without special consent from the Doctoral Program and the Graduate School. In order to retain health insurance benefits, students will be required to continue employment in the summer. The PhD Program Director is responsible for GRA placements, and coordinators with the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs to make GTA placements.

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

As Graduate Research Assistants, students work closely with one or two faculty members on research projects. The research project will focus on the faculty member's area of interest, which may or may not align with the student's area of interest. However, efforts are made to match faculty and students based on substantive area or methodological similarities. Students are mentored by the faculty member and gain experience in research processes. Students also can be included in scholarly activities including the submission of abstracts for conference presentations, co-authoring manuscripts for publication, and assisting with the development and submission of grant proposals.

- The Ph.D. Program Director coordinates the appointment of GRAs and distributes notices of assignments.
- All GRAs assigned to externally funded projects are required to sign an offer letter and return it to the Office of Research and Faculty Affairs.
- Students work with the faculty member(s) for 10 or 20 hours per week. Location and times are determined with the faculty supervisor.

CRITERIA FOR GRA APPOINTMENT

- Enrollment in a minimum number of credits (9 in years 1-2, 6 in years 3-4) in both Fall and Spring semesters and 3 credits in the Summer semester. Students who drop below the minimum enrollment requirements may not be renewed in a GRA position in subsequent semesters.
- Maintain a GPA of 3.2 or higher. GPA will be rounded to the nearest tenth.

SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF GRAS

All GRAs are supervised by the assigned faculty member(s) and are evaluated on criteria including:

- Productivity
- Dependability
- Initiative

- Professionalism.

A copy of the evaluation of the GRA is kept by the PhD program. The Ph.D. program Director reviews evaluations and provides feedback to the GRAs based on evaluations.

Students are also provided the opportunity to complete a mentorship evaluation of their experience in the GRA position. These can be completed anonymously (without naming the student or supervisor) or with identifying information included. Criteria include:
- Professionalism
- Communication and responsiveness
- Guidance
- Professional development.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

After completion of the first-year coursework, including the Social Work Education course, students are eligible to independently teach courses in the BSW or MSW program. Students are provided the opportunity to indicate their preferences for courses, formats, and times of courses.
- The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs coordinates the appointment of GTAs and distributes notices for appointment applications.
- GTAs may teach up to two courses during each semester.

CRITERIA FOR GTA APPOINTMENT

- Enrolled in a minimum number of credits in courses related to their program of work. Students who drop below the minimum enrollment requirements will not be renewed in a GRA position in subsequent semesters.
- Maintain a GPA of 3.2 or higher. GPA will be rounded to the nearest tenth.
- Master's degree in social work (some practice courses require 2 years post-MSW practice experience).
- Completed the first year of Ph.D. coursework, including Social Work Education.
- Language proficiency exams or proof of proficiency is required by the Graduate School for students from countries in which English is not a primary language.

SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF GTAS

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and/or a designated faculty member will provide direct supervision of GTAs. The Manager of Field Education will provide direct supervision of GTAs serving as field liaisons. Supervision can involve the following activities:
- Regular meetings to plan course outlines and readings.
- Discussion of preparation and organization of course content.
- Review of teaching methods.
- Planning and discussing course assignments and grading.
- Discussing grievance (grade appeal) procedures and process.
- Reviewing student evaluations.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are reviewed using the same standardized teaching evaluation form as used for all faculty members. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs reviews teaching evaluations, provides feedback to the GTAs based on evaluations, and places a copy of the summary evaluation in student's file. Re-assignment is subject to evaluations as well as other documentation about professionalism, ethics, and the fulfillment of contractual duties. Students in their first GTA placement also participate in a faculty course visit and evaluation process for formative feedback and support. The PhD Program director facilitates these matches each semester.

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT

To retain health insurance benefits, students will be required to continue employment in the summer. If a dissertation stage student chooses to forgo the health insurance, they may elect to seek employment other than a GRA or GTA and are not required to enroll in summer classes.

TRAVEL FUNDS

At the current time, and based on availability of University and School resources, students may receive up to $1000 per year to support them in presenting a paper or poster at a professional conference. Students must be presenter of an oral presentation, workshop, or poster session to be eligible for funding. The Graduate School only funds one conference per student, and they typically provide $500 per student per year, and the School of Social Work will provide up to $500 in additional funds ($500 from Graduate School + $500 from Social Work = $1000). More information on travel funding through the university can be found on the Graduate School website.

Students will be asked to complete the Request for Travel Authorization form as early as possible and prior to making any travel arrangements. Students must follow all policies for the reservation and reimbursement of travel expenses. Contact the Ph.D. Program Director for more information and referral to the coordinator of travel reimbursement from the School of Social Work.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

Students are encouraged to engage with organizations in the School of Social Work and across the university. Additionally, The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) provides free membership to the association and provides professional development opportunities.

GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE

Graduate Students are represented at the University of Texas at Arlington by the Graduate Student Committee. The Graduate Student Committee is open to all graduate students and organizes events and activities for the benefit of graduate students. Students may also choose to become involved with the Student Government at UTA.

THE PH.D. PROGRAM COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

A Ph.D. student is selected to serve on the Ph.D. Committee on Graduate Studies and represent student interests.

DOCTORAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION (DSA)

The DSA is comprised of all doctoral students in the School of Social Work at UTA. The primary goal of the program is to facilitate communication among students across cohorts, promote professional development, as well as host events to promote interaction between doctoral students and faculty members. The DSA has two faculty advisors. The student administrators serve yearly terms and elections are held in the spring of each year.

The DSA hosts events such as:
- *Mentoring Program* – First year doctoral students are assigned a doctoral student mentor. These mentors act as an additional support system for incoming students and act as a buffer against the rigor of the first year of doctoral study.

- *Lunch & Learns* – Monthly speakers/panels on topics of interest and importance to doctoral students.
- *Faculty-Student Gatherings* – The DSA periodically organizes gatherings for doctoral students and faculty members. These gatherings are an opportunity for doctoral students to interact and get to know faculty members outside of the university setting.

Although all students are encouraged to discuss their needs and challenges with the Ph.D. Program Director and other mentors, the DSA may also advocate for student needs and serve as a liaison between students and School administrators.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The Academic Affairs Office assists and supports students regarding:
- Student retention and student success plans.
- Services for students struggling with academic or personal difficulties.
- Crisis management of student issues.
- Referrals to other resources which may be appropriate.
- Helping students to get involved in UTA and SSW activities and student organizations.
- Career exploration and connection to UTA Career Services.
- Scholarship application processes.