

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Social Work
College of Social Science

PhD Student Handbook Academic Year 2023-2024



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**Please note that some hyperlinks may not work in certain browsers. If you experience this, try opening the link in another browser. If this persists, please contact program director at chohyu12@msu.edu*

Welcome to the School of Social Work at Michigan State University!

Our Mission of Social Justice and Positive Change

The MSU School of Social Work is dedicated to educating students for ethical, competent, responsive, and innovative social work practice, and to conducting and disseminating high quality research that improves the well-being of the most vulnerable in society. Our teaching, research, and outreach synergistically promote social justice, positive change, and solutions to the problems facing diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Michigan State University (MSU) is a public land-grant university and is considered to be one of the best research-intensive (Carnegie Classification R1) globally engaged universities in the world. MSU is also the nation's pioneer land-grant institution, preceding the Morrill Act by seven years. The MSU College of Social Science is one of 18 colleges at Michigan State University and is the largest and among the most diverse at MSU, with more than 6,300 undergraduate and graduate students studying the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. It offers 16 degree programs and seven research centers and institutes.

The MSU School of Social Work is part of the College of Social Science. The School consists of a CSWE-accredited Undergraduate (BASW) Program, a CSWE-accredited Graduate (MSW) Program, and a PhD Program in Social Work, which is a member of GADE, the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education.

As a member of the School of Social Work, you are joining a diverse community of people who are dedicated to the social work profession and work to uphold the profession's Code of Ethics.

We take great pride in our programs, our graduates, and our students. At the doctoral level, the School provides students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become effective leaders of the professional social work community. Our doctoral students receive the education and training necessary to become highly skilled social work scholars, researchers, leaders, and teachers who will enrich the lives of those they serve and the communities and institutions in which they practice. Social workers who have earned a PhD degree from our program are found throughout the state of Michigan, the nation, and the world.

The entire School community is pleased that you have chosen our PhD Program. We look forward to getting to know you and supporting you as you progress through your academic program. We hope to continue to have a connection with you after you have completed your doctoral program when you are leading, teaching, mentoring, and building important new knowledge that promotes social justice and builds positive change.



Hyunkag Cho, PhD
MSU SSW PhD Program Director
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Introduction

Social work is an ethics-based profession. Appropriate use of self is the foundation upon which we build our professional skills at every level of education: BASW, MSW, and PhD. We hope that the material presented in this handbook helps you learn more about the PhD Program and the expectations that faculty, staff, and the practice/research community place upon social work students.



By its very nature, several sections of a student handbook describe policies and procedures for responding to difficulties that students may encounter during their graduate education. However, the great majority of graduate students either do not experience academic difficulty or such matters are handled in a non-adversarial approach through joint problem solving. We endeavor to acknowledge our students' strengths and potential throughout their experiences in graduate school. However, graduate students are ultimately responsible for their educational experiences, and we encourage active engagement in learning.

This PhD Student Handbook provides information about the School of Social Work, the doctoral curriculum, and policies of the School of Social Work, College of Social Science, and University that affect all students. In addition to this handbook, students should become familiar with other documents and reference materials on the University website that contain information pertinent to their doctoral student career. An annotated listing can be found in the [Resources](#) appendix in this handbook.

The PhD Program Director is responsible for assisting students with the procedures outlined in this Handbook, especially prior to and during the first year of study. Although the director is always available to doctoral students, a student's guidance committee chair, chosen by the student during their first year in the program, will assume the role of primary advisor. Since problem-solving skills are at the heart of social work, we strongly encourage students to think of possible actions and solutions to their situations and to be prepared to discuss them. The director and associate directors of the School are also available to meet with students.

Familiarity with the contents of this Handbook is crucial for successfully completing your degree program. It describes resources available to you, your responsibilities as a graduate student of social work at Michigan State University, and academic policies and procedures at the School and University levels.

Contact Information

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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Program Overview

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Contemporary social problems demand a wide range of interventions that depend on and are strengthened by a growing understanding of human needs that cut across a variety of fields of knowledge. To meet this challenge, the PhD Program is designed to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the social work profession and the field of social welfare.

The Specific objectives of the PhD Program are to:

- Develop the capacity to critically evaluate the status and utility of knowledge in social work and related disciplines.
- Advance the skills necessary to formulate professionally relevant research questions, investigate them scientifically, and integrate the findings into social work practice and knowledge.
- Promote competence in a specialized area of social work including the ability to evaluate policy, organizational, and practice components of existing social services in that area.

The PhD Program's principal goal is for graduates to assume leadership positions as social work educators; researchers of social problems and social work intervention methods; planners, administrators, and evaluators of social service programs; and policymakers and analysts.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The PhD Program in social work is designed to prepare social workers for leadership positions in the social work profession. It emphasizes the development, analysis, and application of social work knowledge to be transmitted to students and/or related to professional work in selected practice, policy, or research settings. The PhD Program is designed to root its students firmly in the historical, epistemological, and philosophical bases of social work.

It is also interdisciplinary, requiring course work in a focused area of study. This focused cognate may be in social science or across disciplines. It is designed by the student in consultation with their guidance committee, a group of faculty chosen by the student that represents social work and the focused cognate area. Courses for the cognate may be taken from any department within the University, with appropriate approval from the student's guidance committee chair and committee and are organized around a student's specific area of scholarly interest.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The MSU School of Social Work has a director, an associate director for academic affairs and research, and an associate director for teaching and instruction. The PhD Program has a program director. There is also a doctoral program committee, made up of the PhD Program Director, tenure system faculty members, and a PhD student. The doctoral program committee advises the director.

PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

A well-functioning SSW Ph.D. program requires good communication between and among students, RA Supervisors, the Director of the Ph.D., the Program Coordinator, and others within and outside the School of Social Work. **Students are asked to regularly update the Ph.D. Program Director**, Ph.D. Program Coordinator, Guidance/Dissertation Committee Chairs, and RA supervisors when they achieve a program completion benchmark, e.g., comp exam completion, dissertation proposal accepted, etc. Should students receive a professional award or demonstrate a professional achievement, please let us know. The program tracks student achievements. We also like to let others know of your good work through social media and other venues.

REQUIRED COURSES

In addition to required core social work courses, all students must satisfactorily complete coursework in statistics, research methods, and their chosen cognate, as well as complete a sequenced research practicum. Finally, students must complete a comprehensive examination that bridges social work and social science knowledge, and a doctoral dissertation that also reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the degree. The student works closely with a guidance committee of faculty members, which assists with program planning and monitors progress throughout his/her doctoral program.

All students must satisfactorily complete:

- Required social work coursework, including statistics and research methods
- A research practicum
- Coursework in a focused cognate
- A comprehensive examination
- A doctoral dissertation reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the degree

Detailed information about required courses is found in [Program Components](#). Detailed guidelines for the comp exam and dissertation are found in [Degree Requirements](#).

OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Independent Study Courses

An independent study course is planned study, highly individualized, and not addressable through any other course format. See [Appendix 3](#) for the independent study guidelines.

Specializations, Certificates & Dual Degrees

Specific details about [specializations, certificates, and dual degrees can be found on the PhD Program website](#). These programs are subject to change or development. See [Appendix 4](#) for the programs that are currently available.

STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM/GradPlan

The updated MSU Student Information System (SIS) is called Campus Solutions. Within the SIS/Campus Solutions system, there are sections called GradPlan, GradInfo, and GradAudit. GradPlan is a web-interactive system for doctoral students to create and store their PhD Degree

Plans and subsequent graduate program activities. This includes their program of study, record of committee approvals, RECR trainings, and notes on all of their degree requirements as they are completed. Final acceptance of the dissertation by the Graduate School and the final degree certification by the School, College, and Office of the Registrar are all set up for final approval and stored electronically in the Student Information System.

- For access to the Student Information System, see <https://student.msu.edu/splash.html> on the MSU homepage.
- For Student Information System training, instruction, and resources, see <https://sis.msu.edu/training/index.html>
- Another useful site for SIS information with a sample document is found at: Job Aid: https://sis.msu.edu/_assets/documents/graduate/GR-GradPlanOverview-Student.pdf

A student's degree plan must include a list all of the courses taken or planned that will contribute to the PhD degree, with few exceptions (e.g., an approved course from outside of MSU; waived courses). **It is the student's responsibility to maintain an accurate plan in GradPlan (Student Information System). Exceptions from the standard curriculum should be entered into the notes section of the student's Grad Plan, e.g., waived courses.**

The Graduate School will certify the acceptance of each dissertation final format via GradAudit; the graduate office support staff or other department or college level designee has the final GradAudit sign off. [GradPlan, GradInfo, and GradAudit help guides are found on the GradInfo website.](#)



Program Components

PROGRAM ORIENTATION

The PhD Program schedules an orientation meeting for new doctoral students in the late summer. An overview of the School and the PhD Program are given as well as specific information about coursework, graduate assistantships, school services, procedures, and advising.

ESTABLISHING A GUIDANCE COMMITTEE

Advising: Each incoming student will be matched with a **faculty advisor** by the PhD Program Director. This advisor will be available during the first year to offer advice and mentoring. During the first year of the entering the program, the Research Assistant (RA) Supervisor will serve as the student's advisor. **The SSW Ph.D. program uses term Research Assistant interchangeably with Graduate Assistant.**

Mentoring: [Information about effective use of mentoring and a variety of mentoring resources can be found on the PhD Program website.](#) The MSU Graduate School also offers mentoring workshops. More information is available at: <https://grad.msu.edu/mentor-mentee-workshops> An excellent document is found at: The Graduate School's website, "Optimizing Mentoring,"

Selecting a Guidance Committee Chair: It is expected that the student will have selected a **Guidance Committee Chair** from the School's tenure system faculty by the end of the first year. The role of the guidance committee chair is to provide guidance and mentorship regarding:

- choosing guidance committee members
- the student's degree plan
- the comp exam and dissertation processes
- professional development
- seeking employment

It is also expected that the student, in consultation with their guidance committee chair, will have selected their **Guidance Committee Members** by the end of the first year (More detail can be found in the [Guidance and Dissertation Committees](#) section below). Note that the student may change chairs at their discretion, as long as the change does not occur during the comp exam evaluation period. Any change to the chair or committee must be recorded in GradPlan by the student.

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

The annual progress report is a required annual review of the doctoral student's academic progress, performance, documented RECR training, and professional activities. Once per year at the end of the spring semester, the student will complete the progress report and then meet with their advisor/chair to discuss their progress and goals. The chair and the doctoral student will sign the completed annual progress report, which will then be submitted to the PhD Program Director. Students who are defending their dissertation in the spring or summer of a given year are **required to submit an abbreviated version of the annual progress report, consisting of a current curriculum vitae and Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) report.**

Each completed progress report will be placed into the student's academic file and be used by the PhD Program Director to prepare an annual progress letter, which will be sent to the student and advisor/chair. Graduate students who wish to appeal any part of the chair's evaluation may do so in writing to the PhD Program Director, and this appeal will be filed together with the annual progress report. A fillable pdf form for the annual progress report can be found on the [PhD Program website under Key Forms](#). The policy about this requirement is outlined in Evaluation: section 2.4.8 of the [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities document](#).

COURSEWORK, COMPREHENSIVE EXAM, AND DISSERTATION

Coursework

The student is required to take a total of 63 credits for successful degree completion. These include 39 credits of coursework, and 24 dissertation credits. It generally takes a full-time doctoral student two years to complete the required course work.

All core courses (SW 900, 901, 905, 911, 912, 920, 930) and the two statistics courses must be taken as regularly scheduled courses and independent study cannot be used as a substitute for them. Students may, however, elect to fulfill some of the focused cognate credit hours through an independent study. Independent study is highly individualized planned study not addressable through any other course format, proposed in writing by the student on a standard form, accepted

for supervision by a faculty member, and approved by the student’s academic advisor and the School at the beginning of the semester. Detailed guidelines for Independent Study Courses are found in [Appendix 3](#).

Table 1: Courses and Number of Credit Hours Required for PhD Degree Completion

Required Courses	Credit Hours In Social Work	Credit Hours In Cognate	Total
SW core courses: SW 900, 901, 905	8		8
SW research core courses: SW 911, 912, 920, and 930	10 ^a		10
Focused cognate courses	3 ^{b,c}	12 ^{c,d}	15
Statistics		6 ^d	6
Sub-total	21	18	39
Dissertation: SW 999			24^e
Total			63

NOTES:

- Appropriate post-MSW doctoral-level coursework prior to admission to MSU’s Doctoral Program (up to 13 credits) may be applied to these requirements, with permission from the PhD Program Director.
 - Students interested in transferring into the PhD Program from another PhD program must talk to the PhD Program Director.
- a: Prerequisite is SW 830 or SW 832 or equivalent course.
b: Up to 3 credits may be taken from MSU School of Social Work graduate level course offerings.
c: Focused cognate may include independent study.
d: May include previous graduate work, outside SW, in the chosen discipline or area of study (up to 13 credits, see note above).
e: The maximum number of dissertation credits allowed is 36.

Comprehensive Examination (Comp Exam)

The comprehensive examination serves at least two functions:

- Evaluative: it permits committee members to assess the degree to which students have proficiency in knowledge in a particular area
- Developmental: it is intended to encourage the student to recognize linkages between material learned in different courses and at times in order to become exposed to material that may not have been covered in depth in formal course work.

In accordance with University guidelines, the exam may be undertaken “when the prescribed course work is substantially complete as defined by the Guidance Committee.” The exam must be passed within five years of entering the program. Since the process generally takes up to a year, students must plan to start no later than their fourth year. Generally speaking, a student must have successfully completed all of their core social work and statistics courses with a grade of at least 3.0 prior to starting the comp exam process, although exceptions can be made with approval from the PhD Program Director; Please note exceptions are likely to be rare and only for extraordinary circumstances. It is required that a student be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which the committee grades the exam. More detail about the comp exam is found in the [Program Components](#) section of this handbook.

Examples of passed comprehensive exams are found on the SSW Ph.D. program website. They were posted with students' permission.

Dissertation: SW 999 (24-36 Credits)

After students have successfully completed the comp exam and achieved candidacy, they register for dissertation credits. (Note: students can register for dissertation credits prior to this point in their studies if they desire.) Students are required to register for at least one dissertation credit during the semester in which they defend the dissertation. Students must successfully complete at least 24 and no more than 36 dissertation credits to earn their PhD. The dissertation must be defended within eight years of the student's beginning the first course to be counted toward the PhD degree. Students may not begin collecting (in the case of primary data) or analyzing (in the case of secondary data analysis) their dissertation data until they have successfully defended their dissertation proposal and received IRB approval. More detail about the dissertation is found in this handbook under [Degree Requirements](#).

GUIDANCE AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEES

Guidance Committee Membership

The guidance committee must consist of at least four faculty members holding regular appointments in their respective departments at MSU; this is typically three SW members and one member outside of SW. Generally, regular faculty members are people who are in the tenure system and employed by MSU. At least three of the committee members, including the chair, must have a PhD.

Adjunct faculty of the School may **not** be considered as one of the four members unless they have regular faculty status in another MSU department. Approval by a previous committee does not guarantee inclusion on subsequent committees. A new application is required.

Students may petition the Graduate School for acceptance of a non-tenure system or non-MSU faculty member as a committee member. See <https://grad.msu.edu/non-regular-faculty-committees> This process is described in detail on the Graduate School website under procedure: <https://grad.msu.edu/graduate-school-approved-faculty-committees> These requests are now processed online.

Please note that the petition process and outcomes are regulated by the Graduate School. It involves the potential committee member submitting their CV and supporting documents for approval at the School, College, and Graduate School levels. Please contact the PhD Program Director for details. Approval by a previous committee does not guarantee inclusion on subsequent committees. A new application is required.

Guidance Committee Composition

The guidance committee must include at least two regular social work faculty members, one of whom will serve as chair. The remaining two members can be from social work or from outside of social work. Typically, students choose to have a third social work faculty member and one

outside member who will generally have expertise in the student's focused cognate area. Additional members who can contribute to the student's program may serve on the guidance committee and assist in the work of the committee, provided that the number of such persons does not exceed the number of regular faculty on the committee; however, additional members are not recommended.

It is strongly recommended that the student select the chair of their guidance committee during the spring semester of their first year in the program. With consultation from the chair, the student will add the remaining three committee members by the end of their first year in the program. At that time, a meeting of the whole committee is held to discuss the student's degree plan. The student must enter the degree plan into the GradPlan online system.

Guidance Committee Process

Once the committee has been established, the student will prepare to meet with the committee members and present a tentative plan of study. After the student and committee have met and developed a plan of study, the student is required to go to [GradPlan](#) (Student Information System) and [log in to GradPlan](#) (in order to enter information about their degree plan. This plan will include courses to be taken, tentative comp exam topics, and the tentative dissertation topic, among other things.

Once the degree plan is complete, the student submits it online by clicking the "submit" button. The plan will then route to the graduate office support staff, the committee members, and the PhD Program Director, for their approval. Any changes, such as new committee members or changes in courses, can be made by the student at any time by logging back into GradPlan. Students will have access to GradPlan for two years post-graduation.

When selecting committee members, it is important to consider that only the social work faculty members will evaluate the student's comp exam. Outside members do not evaluate the comp exam proposal or exam.

Once a student has formed their guidance committee, meetings will take place regularly. It is suggested that guidance committees meet every semester but must meet at least once a year.

Dissertation Committee Membership and Composition

The dissertation committee must include the same composition as the guidance committee (i.e., at least two social work faculty members and at least one outside member and a total of at least four members). However, the individual members of the committee may be different than those who served on the guidance committee. Reasons for selecting new committee members for dissertation work may include a change in the focus of the student's interest, scheduling conflicts (e.g., a faculty member going on sabbatical), or mutual agreement between the student and a faculty member.

It is the responsibility of the student to negotiate any replacements on the committee with the members who are involved, and to inform the PhD Program Director. Change in membership must also be recorded in GradPlan by the student. As with the composition of the guidance committee, described above, faculty members must be regular MSU faculty unless previously

approved. See the above section on [Guidance Committees](#) for the steps on how to gain approval for an outside member on your dissertation committee.

Dissertation Committee Process

After students have successfully defended their dissertation proposal, the chair and committee members must sign the dissertation proposal contract form available [on the PhD Program website under Key Forms](#), thus agreeing to the substance and format of the dissertation.

Dissertation committees meet as necessary to ensure that the student is getting the support needed to make progress. It is suggested that dissertation committees meet every semester, but at least once a year.

Changing Committee Membership

For both the guidance and dissertation committees, faculty members serve at the request of the student. Students may change the composition of either committee at appropriate times (e.g., not while a comp exam is in process or being evaluated by the committee) and can do so when they feel this will assist in degree completion. It is expected that the student will make the change in a professional manner. It is recommended that students who wish to change committee members ascertain, prior to making the change, whether the prospective new committee member agrees with the student's plan of study and/or comp exam proposal. For example, in the case of the guidance/dissertation committee members, consider the extent of agreement/knowledge support for the ideas of the proposal.

Any faculty member may also choose to resign membership on either committee at any time.



Degree Requirements

COURSEWORK

The PhD course offerings in social work are designed to meet the needs of students and to offer exposure to the core content areas of knowledge construction and epistemology; historical, philosophical, and ethical bases of social work; evaluation research and research methods; and policy analysis. Additionally, students take at least six credits in statistics and 15 credits in a focused cognate, three of which can be taken in social work.

Table 2 below contains information on the courses required for completion of the PhD Program in social work at Michigan State University. Detailed descriptions of the individual courses are included immediately following.

Table 2: Courses and Number of Credit Hours Required for PhD Degree Completion

Required Courses	Credit Hours In Social Work	Credit Hours In Cognate	Total
SW core courses: SW 900, 901, 905	8		8

SW research courses: SW 911, 912, 920, and 930	10 ^a		10
Focused cognate courses	3 ^{b,c}	12 ^{c,d}	15
Statistics		6 ^d	6
Sub-total	21	18	39
Dissertation: SW 999			24^e
Total			63

NOTES:

- Appropriate post-MSW doctoral-level coursework prior to admission to MSU's Doctoral Program (up to 13 credits) may be applied to these requirements, with permission from the PhD Program Director.
- Students interested in transferring into the PhD Program from another PhD program must talk to the PhD Program Director.

a: Prerequisite is SW 830 or SW 832 or equivalent course.

b: Up to 3 credits may be taken from MSU School of Social Work graduate level course offerings.

c: Focused cognate may include independent study.

d: May include previous graduate work, outside SW, in the chosen discipline or area of study (up to 13 credits, see note above).

e: The maximum number of dissertation credits allowed is 36.

Core Social Work Courses (8 credits)

- **SW 900:** Doctoral Proseminar in Social Work (2 credits). Fall of every year. Acquaints student with some of the major issues in social work research and teaching. Students learn how to read empirical literature critically, and develop skills related to formulating research questions that are tied to their literature review. In addition, this course will focus on helping students develop a research agenda, specifically on problem delineation and identification of research, and start to begin to develop their philosophy of teaching.
- **SW 901:** Knowledge Construction in Social Work (3 credits). Fall of even years. Examines epistemology and theory construction in social work, such as how values and ethics influence the knowledge and theory guiding endeavor.
- **SW 905:** Historical and Current Analysis of Social Work and Social Problems (3 credits). Fall of odd years. Assesses social welfare policies and social problems, the historical underpinnings of social policies and problems, and explores the use of analytic frameworks to examine the current situation.

Research Courses (10 credits)

- **SW 911 & 912:** Sequenced Research Practicum (2 credits each, 4 credits total). Spring and fall of every year; students take 911 in spring of their second year, 912 in fall of their third year. Provides student with the opportunity to complete a research project from the initial formation of the research question through data collection, analysis, and manuscript/presentation production. Course is sequenced across spring and fall semester; in order to move on to 912, a student must have completed 911 and earned at least a 3.0. All students within the two semester sequence will share authorship.
- **SW 920:** Evaluation of Social Work Services and Practices (3 credits). Spring of odd years. Considers the evaluation of social service organizations, service delivery, and practice outcomes. Presents evaluation models, design issues, and professional roles in planning and implementing evaluation studies related to social work practice.
- **SW 930:** Social Work Research Using Quantitative and Qualitative Methods (3 credits). Spring of even years. Advanced quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches used in evaluation of social work practice, policies, and programs.

Other Required Course Work (21 credits)

- Six Credits in Statistics (two classes at 3 credits each)
There are multiple statistics sequences available at MSU for students to take, including courses in CEP, sociology, and political science. Please check with the PhD program director regarding which classes are appropriate to fulfill the requirement. It is recommended that students take stats during their first year in the program; courses must be semester-long, rather than brief summer courses.
- Courses in **Focused Cognate** (15 credits)
Up to three of these credits may be in social work, either through a graduate level elective or an independent study (SW 890).

GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION (COMP EXAM)

Overview

The purpose of the social work comprehensive examination is threefold; students are expected to demonstrate:

- proficiency in knowledge in a particular area or areas,
- the ability to critically evaluate and synthesize material within these areas, and
- the capacity to write at the doctoral level

The exam is an independent, new effort by the student. There is no faculty review of drafts of the exam, nor is a student allowed to use prior written work for the comp exam. Faculty members may not engage with the student about the comp exam from the time the proposal has been approved until the exam has been completed.

Proficiency is defined as the integration, synthesis, and communication of major theoretical and empirical knowledge in the designated area including a critical analysis of the work. The written document is expected to reflect the student's ability to communicate effectively with attention to scholarly style, clarity, and composition using the most recent APA format.

Topic area

Discussion of the comp exam begins with a decision about a topic area. The topic chosen must have a relationship to social work and/or social welfare and be on a substantive topic of interest to the student. It will include research findings (including different methods/approaches, previous historical work in the area, current research, and gaps in the literature), a rationale for focusing on this particular topic, theoretical foundations of the topic, the policy context, and social work practice implications.

It is strongly recommended that the topic be relevant to the student's research goals and broad enough to encompass core social work areas (e.g., practice, policy, research, history) while also being specific enough that the literature is not overwhelming. It is suggested that the topic area consist of a specific construct (e.g., depression, trauma) or issue (e.g., welfare reform, foster care) and a population (e.g., children, women, prisoners). Examples: Trauma and adolescents; prison and women; suicide and elderly; welfare reform and poor families.

Beginning the work: Once the topic area is agreed upon, the student begins reading comprehensively about the topic in social work and other relevant social science empirical literature. This reading will complement and build upon the reading completed in course work but under no circumstances will it be limited to course work reading. Success in creating the outline and in completing the exam will depend on the breadth of the student's reading and the knowledge of the topic area.

While the subject matter of the social work comp exam may be related to course work or papers the student has already completed, the written product of the comp exam must be independent of papers or other products completed in the student's program.

The decision of a topic area for the comp exam must be formalized with the guidance committee chair.

Proposal

Developing the proposal: Before the comp exam proposal can be written, the topic must be approved by the student's guidance committee chair.

After topic approval, the guidance committee chair may guide the student to relevant readings prior to attempting the outline that will become the comp exam proposal. In addition, the student may want to seek out other faculty members with expertise in the area of inquiry about key readings or review articles. The student's reading is expected to be thorough and include readings from other disciplines, even those outside social sciences if appropriate. For example, if the topic is health-related, reading medical journals makes good sense. Once the student has a fairly thorough review of the literature completed, a draft of the proposal is submitted to the guidance committee chair. The chair may approve it at this time or ask for modifications. This work between the student and chair will most likely include several rounds of back-and-forth revisions and will take place over several months.

The chair must approve the proposal before it is sent out to the other social work committee members for their review and approval. The chair and committee members will use the rubric located at the end of this section as their guide for evaluating the proposal. (The same rubric is used to review the actual comp exam.)

The proposal (format is detailed below) for the comp exam represents an integration and synthesis of the student's reading, leading to a critical analysis of the topic area that demonstrates gaps in the current empirical research. This critical analysis will assist the student in developing plans for dissertation research. Content for the proposal must include attention to the following areas: rationale (i.e., an explanation of why the topic is relevant and important), historical review, policy context and/ or implications, how the topic has been empirically studied previously (including epistemology and different methods), current empirical research gaps, and implications for social work practice. The student must consult with their guidance committee chair as to the format the chair would like for the comp exam proposal.

The comp exam proposal includes, at minimum, the following:

- Topic area
- Brief introduction (1-2 pages) providing the background and significance of the topic

- Very detailed outline, with references that demonstrate the structure of the final paper with all of the areas of the rubric covered thoroughly
 - Individual chairs may request that students supplement their outlines with additional content, e.g., a detailed paragraph or section on each main area of the proposal.
- Reference bibliography
 - The bibliography may include a section for references cited within the outline and another section for additional important information that has not been included in the outline but may be utilized in the exam.
 - References must be predominantly scholarly writing such as peer-reviewed empirical journal articles. Because the main goal of the exam is a comprehensive and broad examination of the topic area, it is difficult to require an exact number of references, but it is expected that there will be an extensive and exhaustive review of the literature resulting in a minimum of approximately 50 sources for your exam.

Role of the guidance committee chair and other faculty member/s: The chair of the student’s guidance committee will work with the student to prepare the comprehensive examination proposal. This assistance includes help in defining the topic and relevant literature. The chair helps the student organize the material making sure that the coverage of the topic will be broad and comprehensive, yet manageable. The second social work faculty member (and the third if the student has three members from social work) and/or other faculty may also be consulted during the preparation of the proposal outline. It is the chair’s responsibility, however, to see that the proposal is in line with the goals listed above, and that the scope is such that under normal circumstances (i.e., where a student devotes approximately a half-time effort) the comp exam can be completed within a maximum of three (3) months from the acceptance of the student’s proposal outline.

It is important that the student remember that faculty members are not expected to work with them over the summer. It is the student’s responsibility to talk with their chair and committee members about summer availability. Do not assume they will be available.

Approval: The final version of the written proposal must be reviewed by the chair and the social work faculty member/s and formally approved before the student is able to move forward with working on the comp exam.

If the student is unable to produce a proposal that meets with the committee’s approval, the student may be dismissed from the PhD Program. In such a case, committee members will confer with the PhD Program Director. It is understood that the comp exam process utilizes a higher level of skills than course work and that some students may not be able to proceed to writing the comp exam.

Changing topics, chair, or guidance committee members: Prior to the submission of the proposal to the committee members, a student may decide to select a new topic, chair, and/or committee without penalty. However, once the proposal has been submitted to the committee, the student is committed to the topic, proposal, and current chair and committee for the duration of the proposal and comp exam processes.

Format

It is expected that the final comp exam paper will be an integrated and synthesized critical analysis of 30-40 pages in length (not including the list of references). The paper must be double-spaced with 1” margins and size 12 font. The paper is expected to reflect professional standards for publishable papers both in terms of adequacy of content, communication style, and presentation. Use of current APA standards is required.

The comp exam reflects independent work on the part of the student. Committee members may not provide feedback to the work while it is in progress. In addition to the written part of the exam, the student and/or the committee may contract for an oral portion; this will be an individual decision based on committee member recommendations.

The comp exam paper must follow logically from the proposal approved by the chair and committee.

The assessment rubric included at the end of this section provides further guidance to the student as it details what factors the guidance committee chair and committee will be considering as they evaluate the student’s work products. The student, with the chair’s permission, should submit the written comp examination for grading to social work guidance committee members from social work. **It is a good idea to send as well the agreed upon comp exam outline and the grading rubric, so the reviewer is prepared to move to grading.** The same rubric is used for both the final proposal and then the comp exam. The chair and committee members will use the rubric as general guide in evaluating the comp exam. Additional discussion and comments are also considered. Reviewers will send their completed rubric, document markups (optional), and comments to the Guidance Committee Chair.

Time Frame

Once the committee approves the proposal, the student has a maximum of three months to complete and return the comp exam to the chair and committee members for evaluation. Under extraordinary extenuating circumstances, there may be the opportunity for an extension. The request for extension must be in writing to the chair with a copy to the PhD Program Director. Only one extension will be allowed, with the length to be determined by the guidance committee chair and PhD Program Director. If there is an extensive gap between proposal approval and exam completion, the chair may require an update to the literature in the proposal.

Note: Comprehensive examinations must be completed and approved by the guidance committee by the end of the student’s fifth year. If the student has not successfully completed and passed the exam by that time, the student will be required to meet with their chair and the PhD Program Director to discuss next steps.

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination

Committee Responsibilities: The guidance committee chair and other social work faculty member/s on the student’s guidance committee are responsible for evaluating the student’s work. They may, if they deem it necessary or appropriate, seek input from other social work faculty or from the social science discipline or focused cognate committee members, but it is the social work committee members who evaluate the work as acceptable or unacceptable. Close attention

will be paid to whether the student is able to comprehensively cover the material outlined in the proposal and executed in the exam.

Typically, the student will be notified of the result of the examination within two to four weeks of completion. If the exam is completed when faculty members are not readily available to devote time to reviewing the exam (such as just prior to University holidays or during the summer), a longer evaluation period may be required. If a committee member will be on leave or is no longer on the faculty while the student is in the process of working on the exam, it is hoped that this member will continue to work with the student until the completion of this process. If this is not possible, or if the student or faculty member finds this unacceptable, the PhD Program Director and/or members of the doctoral program committee will assist the student in finding a replacement or will serve in that capacity themselves.

Evaluation standards: Evaluation of the exam is based on the rubric found after this section. The rubric indicates that students are expected to successfully integrate the material, review a broad segment of the pertinent literature, and perform critical analyses across their readings. Additionally, they will be evaluated on the comprehension and clarity of their writing, their adherence to APA standards, and additional comments.

It is expected that the student will identify key issues and gaps in conceptualization, theory, and research, integrate relevant social work and social science knowledge, and cover the core social work course areas, i.e., research, policy, history and epistemology, and issues of philosophy, theory, and ethics.

The exam that the student completes and turns into the committee may be found to be acceptable or unacceptable. If acceptable, the comprehensive examination process is considered complete and the student advances to the dissertation proposal. If the exam is deemed unacceptable by the committee, the student has the option of either re-writing the exam or withdrawing from the PhD Program.

Students are allowed one re-write only and they are given 60 days to complete the re-write. Re-writing the exam may be minor (such as strengthening a particular area or adding a few references) or extensive. An extensive re-write may be necessary because the student was unable to synthesize or critically analyze the literature or has left out significant and important literature on the topic area. In the case of an exam requiring extensive re-writes or when there are extenuating circumstances, a second revision may be requested. However, the opportunity to complete a second revision of the exam is up to the discretion of the guidance committee chair and committee in conjunction with the PhD Program Director.

There will be no more than two revisions allowed under any circumstances.

If the guidance committee requests a revision, the committee will give the student sufficient feedback and detailed expectations about the required revisions and explicit period for the student to achieve an acceptable status. Students will have 60 days in which to complete the re-write. If the student's committee members cannot reach a majority opinion on a grade, the PhD Program Director will assign an additional reader.

Following the student’s successful completion of the comp exam, the student’s guidance committee will complete the record of comprehensive examinations form, found on the [PhD Program website under Key Forms](#), and the student will submit the signed form to the graduate office. Students must be registered for at least one credit hour (typically a dissertation credit) during the semester in which the comp exam is evaluated.

If the student does not successfully meet the objectives of the comp exam, even after revision, the student will be dismissed from the PhD Program. Formal grievance processes are available to the student if they feel that their failure is based on personal factors or inappropriate or unfair behavior of the committee. (This process is detailed in the section on Grievances).

Rubric for Assessing Comprehensive Exam Proposal and Exam

Note: This rubric is not intended to provide a score or cut point for successful comprehensive proposals and exams. It is intended to be a communication device so that expectations are clearly delineated prior to the exam and areas for revision can be articulated.

Areas of Assessment	Absent 0	Minimal 1	Fair 2	Acceptable 3	Superb 4
Clear and comprehensible writing					
Detailed rationale for study					
Integration & synthesis of content areas					
Critical analyses across content areas					
Extensive/exhaustive reading evident					
History of issue/problem reviewed					
Policy context/implications addressed					
Theoretical framework provided					
Broad and well-integrated review of current empirical research					
Understanding of the epistemology underlying previous empirical studies demonstrated					
Understanding of what methods were used in prior empirical studies, and how these methods may shape current findings demonstrated					
Gaps in empirical research are identified and discussed					
Implications and importance of the area in terms of social work practice discussed					
Adherence to current APA Standards					
<i>For exam only:</i> Paper is 30-40 pages in length					

GUIDELINES FOR THE DISSERTATION

As with the comprehensive proposal and exam process, students are expected to spend many months on both the dissertation proposal and the actual dissertation. With each, students can anticipate writing multiple drafts over time, with feedback from the dissertation committee chair.

It is likely that chairs may take several weeks to review and return drafts, and this back and forth process needs to be accounted for in a student's anticipated timelines.

It is important that the student remember that faculty members are not expected to collaborate with them over the summer. It is the student's responsibility to talk with their chair and committee members about summer availability. Do not assume they will be available.

Students may not begin collecting (in the case of primary data) nor analyzing (in the case of secondary data analysis) their dissertation data until they have successfully defended their dissertation proposal, had their dissertation methods approved by the committee, and received IRB approval.

Proposal

Structure: The structure of the dissertation proposal will be suggested by the dissertation committee chair. For example, some chairs require that the proposal mirror the first three chapters of a dissertation (the introductory overview chapter, the literature review, and the methods chapter) while others require only a detailed outline and bibliography. Its structure will also depend upon whether or not you are doing a traditional dissertation or the multiple manuscript option (see below).

At a minimum, the dissertation proposal includes the following areas:

- rationale or significance of the proposed research, citing relevant literature and illuminating the gaps in current research
- introduction/literature review including literature and/or prior empirical research that provides a background to the proposed research
- statement of the problem or specific aims for the proposed project, including specification of major research questions or hypotheses to be addressed
- research plan, including proposed methods and timelines for completing all phases of the research. The timeline must include the process for obtaining human subject research approval. The principal investigator for the student's IRB application must be the current dissertation committee chair or another current designated committee member
- resources required to complete the proposed research (e.g., cooperation of outside agencies, research assistants, external funding sought or received)

Approval: The student's dissertation committee chair approves the final version of the proposal before the proposal goes to the committee members for their review and approval. The chair's role is to ensure that the proposal is in strong shape and ready for review/approval by the entire committee. Committee members must have at least two to three weeks to review the proposal before meeting with the student and chair to discuss the proposal.

It is common for the committee to make recommendations for changes to the proposal or make recommendations about certain aspects to incorporate into the dissertation. The final dissertation proposal, including any changes that the committee members require, must be approved by the chair and committee members. At that time, the dissertation proposal contract (found on the [PhD Program website under Key Forms](#)) must be signed and submitted to the graduate office support staff before the student may proceed with work on their dissertation.

Process

After the proposal has been approved by the dissertation committee, it is most common for the student to work on the dissertation primarily under the direction of the chair. The extent to which other committee members are involved during the actual course of the dissertation writing and engaged in the feedback process will vary based on the chair's preferred process; the interest, availability, and expertise of the committee member/s; and the needs of the student.

The dissertation committee chair stipulates the schedule and format for the student to submit drafts of the dissertation for the chair's review (i.e., the chair may wish to see complete drafts of the dissertation for review or prefer to review the work chapter by chapter). Regardless of the details of the review/feedback process between the chair and student, this process often takes three to six months across numerous drafts of the proposal.

Timeline: As a general guideline, the student must plan to have a completed first draft to the chair at *least three to four months* prior to the tentative dissertation defense date, although the timeline will look different if the chair wishes to review chapter by chapter. Regardless, the student must allow for multiple months for the feedback and revision process. As with the proposal, the chair decides when the dissertation is ready to go to the committee members for their review. Assuming the dissertation is approved with minor changes, be sure to sign up for graduation well in advance of the ceremony. The university is strict about completion numerous graduation expectations, including preparing to meet all of the requirements for completion of the program. The Graduate School often offers drop in trainings in moving the dissertation document to the university required format.

Multiple Manuscript Option

As its title indicates, a multiple manuscript dissertation involves the production of multiple papers, i.e., at least three separate publishable manuscripts. The dissertation committee chair and committee members will evaluate whether the manuscripts are publishable based on their expertise regarding particular journals. In other words, each paper must be evaluated at the proposal stage with a lens of the extent that the work is likely to be publishable, e.g., methods, sample size, and findings.

The three publishable manuscripts do not need to be totally related, though typically there is some relationship such as a common theme, qualitative and quantitative reports from the same study, different sets of variables from the same study, or the same general population group.

Each of the manuscripts stands on its own, thus producing three separate potential articles for the student/author. Each manuscript is discrete, and each must have its own literature review, methods section, findings, discussion, tables, figures, and references.

- One of the three manuscripts can be a critical review of the literature that is broader than the literature review provided for each research article, e.g., a state of the field type of article similar to that which might be found in *Psychological Bulletin*.

- The remaining two articles (or all three) must each report on the research conducted for the dissertation. They may be quantitative or qualitative in nature or employ mixed methods.
- Each article must have its own abstract as would be required for submission to a journal.
- In addition, the dissertation must have an overall abstract.
- The introductory chapter provides an overview of the work to be presented.
- The concluding chapter provides a broader summary than is presented in each article. It must discuss what has been learned as a result of this body of work and what the implications are for social work education, research, practice, and/or policy, as relevant.

As with any dissertation plan, students must propose this type of dissertation to their committee to ascertain whether the chair and committee members agree that this is a good method for the proposed topic and research plan. The proposal procedures are the same as for a traditional dissertation as described above.

The structure of the multiple manuscript dissertation generally comprises five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that introduces the general theme of the dissertation. This is followed by one chapter for each manuscript. The entire dissertation is completed by a concluding chapter that integrates the major findings of the three individual manuscripts.

Sample table of contents for a multiple manuscript dissertation:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to the overall topic of the dissertation and a very brief discussion of the chapters that follow and how they relate to the topic.
- Chapter 2: Paper #1: Can be a literature review paper of the overall topic area or a research project that includes an Introduction, Methods section, Results, and Discussion.
- Chapter 3: Paper #2: A research project/study reported as above.
- Chapter 4: Paper #3: A research project/study reported as above.
- Chapter 5: Conclusions/summary for the dissertation across all three papers.

Defense

When the dissertation has been approved by the dissertation committee chair and sent to the committee members for their review, the student and dissertation committee chair set a date for the dissertation defense. The committee members must be given at least two weeks to review the dissertation prior to the defense, although three weeks is preferred. All members of the dissertation committee must be present at the defense (or be able to participate via telephone, Zoom, or other electronic means) and must evaluate and approve the final product.

The final defense is intended as an opportunity for the student to clarify, elaborate, and/or justify the procedure utilized and the findings obtained. Its structure will be determined at the chair's discretion. Typically, the student will make a brief presentation, providing an overview of the study and highlighting key findings; PowerPoint or a more informal approach may be used, depending on what the chair advises. Then the committee will ask the student questions and engage in discussion as a group without the student's presence.

Per the guidelines from the Graduate School, the dissertation defense must consist of two parts. The first part is a presentation by the doctoral candidate that must be open to faculty members in

general and members of the public without a vote. The second part is the examination portion of the defense, which only the dissertation committee members may attend.

After the defense has been conducted, the committee may approve the dissertation as is or require the student to make modifications and/or additions. About 80% of these meetings lead to recommended minor revisions and/or additions.

Formatting

Once the student has made the changes required by their committee, they must finalize its format according to University standards and submit it. The guidelines for formatting and submitting your dissertation are extensive. The detailed formatting guide can be found on the Graduate School website: <https://grad.msu.edu/>

There are [links to the formatting tutorial](#) there as well as other topics of interest about dissertations. The Graduate School offers drop in assistance from time to time. It is a good idea to take advantage of this assistance.

After a Successful Defense

Upon a successful defense and final acceptance of the dissertation the proper form (the record of dissertation and oral exam found on the [PhD Program website under Key Forms](#)) is completed and signed by the dissertation committee. Then the student must submit it to the School's graduate office. Students can provide a copy of the finished dissertation to their chair and perhaps each committee member.

In keeping with MSU's public mission, the University requires that theses, dissertations, and abstracts will become public after the conferral of the degree; embargoes can only be pursued for a limited period (see [1] below). Results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination by funding agencies (see [2] below) cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis or dissertation to the Graduate School.

[1] Hold/embargo on publication of documents submitted to ProQuest:

Students submitting a thesis/dissertation to ProQuest now can request a hold/embargo of publication by ProQuest by contacting the Graduate School at msuetds.approval@grd.msu.edu. In response to the request, the Graduate School will send directly to the student a form that needs to be completed and turned to the Graduate School prior to submission of the document to ProQuest. The form needs to be signed by the student's major professor and by the Associate Dean of the student's college. The request for the hold/embargo may be for six months, one year or two years. Requests for a period longer than six months must include a written justification for the length of the hold/embargo.

[2] Graduate students' participating in University Research Organization (URO; <https://uro.egr.msu.edu/>):

Graduate students involved in a URO project will receive both written documentation and a verbal explanation of any limitations or implications to their current or future academic progress prior to participating on the project. Students engaging in work for a URO project undergo a 2-

step approval process before hiring: a consultation with a representative of the URO's office to explain the restrictions on the project, and an interview with the Graduate School Dean or Dean's designee to discuss the relationship, if any, between their work as graduate students and their participation in the project. Students must be informed that results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis or dissertation. As part of their degree program, all graduate students must have research options to ensure the generation of appropriate results to fulfill the degree requirements, and to have data for professional development activities that are integral to their graduate education (e.g., presentations at conferences and research seminars).

Each student is responsible for closing out their dissertation research via the IRB Closure form (available on the [PhD Program website under Key Forms](#)). [More information about closure can be found on the Human Research Protection Program website](#).

Finally, the student must go into Campus Solutions and enter their IRB# and their finalized, approved dissertation title. There is a form for this on the forms page of the Graduate School: <https://grad.msu.edu/forms>

The final version of the dissertation is submitted to ProQuest.

Exit Survey: The student must also complete the Graduate School's exit survey (called SED survey). See ExistSurvey@grad.msu.edu
TIME LIMITS FOR COMPLETION OF DEGREE

The University requires that students successfully pass their **comprehensive examination within five years** and their **dissertation within eight years** of beginning the first course to be counted toward the PhD degree. **Even if a student takes a general leave of absence or a medical leave, the eight-year time limit still applies.** See <https://deanofstudents.msu.edu/medical-leave>

If a student has not successfully passed the comp exam within five years, a meeting will be scheduled with the student, guidance committee chair, and PhD Program Director to discuss next steps. **If a student has not successfully defended the dissertation within eight years, and has not been granted an extension, they will be dismissed from the program.**

Extensions

If there are extraordinary extenuating circumstances that have prevented the student from completing this comprehensive exam within five years or finishing the dissertation within the allotted eight years the student, with the approval of the PhD Program Director, may apply for an extension beyond the five or eight years. **This extension request must be made prior to the end of the 5- or 8-year time limit.** The student must then follow the extension work plan and successfully pass the comprehensive exam or defend the dissertation within the extension time frame. The PhD Program Director will monitor the student's adherence to the agreed-upon work plan. Failure to follow the work plan and deadlines will result in the student being dismissed from the program.

Leaves of Absence (General, Medical, or Grief)

This section pertains to students with regard to their academic responsibilities. A student may voluntarily withdraw from the University for any reason through the middle of the term of instruction; detailed information about this is found on the [Office of the Registrar website](#).

General Leave of Absence: As described above, taking a leave of absence, whether for general reasons or medical ones, does not stop the 8-year time clock students are given to complete the PhD. Students may request a general leave of absence from the program for extenuating personal or professional circumstances by submitting a written request to the PhD Program Director after consultation with their guidance or dissertation committee chair. The student must be in good standing, as determined by the PhD Program Director (i.e., must have been performing successfully in both recent or current classes as well as GA duties or other assigned roles) and must meet with the PhD Program Director in person in order for the leave of absence to be considered and approved.

Medical Leave/Withdrawal: Withdrawal after the middle of the semester will be granted by the Medical Leave/Withdrawal Committee only in exceptional circumstances. This procedure governs requests for an exception to the normal University withdrawal policy based on exceptional circumstances that are medical in nature. Exceptional circumstances are generally unforeseen occurrences that significantly limit a student's ability to withdraw prior to midterm. A withdrawal after the middle of the term of instruction is an extraordinary remedy and is intended to be applied narrowly. The procedures of the Medical Leave/Withdrawal are found in the Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures website (see "Leave, Extensions, and Waivers"). The link is: <https://grad.msu.edu/policies-and-procedures>

Grief-related Leave: <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/GriefAbsence.aspx>

For doctoral students, it is the responsibility of the student to:

- notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation
- provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty
- complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty.

It is the responsibility of the advisor/chair to:

- determine with the student the expected period of absence; it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances
- receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return
- make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence.

If the student is employed a GA, the graduate student must also notify their supervising faculty member. Faculty and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) refer to

the bereavement policy in the MSU GEU Union Contract: <http://geuatmsu.org/about/geu-contract/>.

Readmission after Leave: Graduate students whose enrollment at Michigan State University is interrupted for any reason so that they have not been enrolled for three consecutive semesters, including summer, [must apply for readmission via the web](#). Domestic students must submit their application at least one month prior to the first day of registration for the semester in which the student expects to resume graduate studies. International students must submit their application at least four months prior to the beginning of the term in which the student expects to resume studies.

A student that wishes to return following a medical withdrawal must follow specific University procedures for assessment of and recommendation about their readiness-to-return.

A student who is ready to apply for readmission must contact the PhD Program Director and their chair to discuss re-entry and timelines to completion of the program.

Leaving the program

In order to facilitate students' timely progress toward completing their degree, **if a student has completed the sixth year** of the program and has not successfully defended the dissertation proposal, a mandatory meeting between the chair, student, and PhD Program Director will be held to discuss whether the student will leave the program, or whether a concrete, detailed plan for moving forward will be created. Any plan created will be monitored by the chair and PhD Program Director. If it is decided at the meeting that the student does not have a realistic chance of completing the degree within the eight years, the student will be counseled out of the program.

Similarly, **if a student has completed the seventh year** of the program and has not successfully defended their dissertation, a mandatory meeting between the chair, student, and PhD Program Director will be held to discuss whether the student will leave the program, or whether a concrete, detailed plan for moving forward will be created. Any plan created will be monitored by the chair and PhD Program Director. If it is decided at the meeting that the student does not have a realistic chance of completing the degree within the eight years, the student will be counseled out of the program.

PROGRESSION THROUGH THE PROGRAM

In general, it is expected that a full-time student in the MSU PhD Program in social work will complete their degree requirements in five years.

Typical Student Timetable for a Full-Time Doctoral Student

Table 3: Typical Student Timetable for a Full-Time Doctoral Student

Year in Program	Beginning of year	By end of the year
Year 1	Advisor assigned by PhD Program	Select Guidance Committee Chair Select Guidance Committee Members Hold first Guidance Committee Meeting Degree plan entered in GradPlan (gradplan.msu.edu) Complete first year coursework Complete Annual Review Year 1
Year 2		Complete second year coursework Complete Year 2 Annual Review
Year 3	Complete comp exam proposal	Complete comp exam Complete Year 3 Annual Review
Year 4	Complete dissertation proposal	Dissertation work begins Student may begin teaching Complete Year 4 Annual Review
Year 5	Dissertation work continues	Dissertation completed and successfully defended IRB closure done Complete GradPlan entries Complete Year 5 Annual Review Fill out forms required for graduation

Doctoral Course Work and Activities Timeline

A detailed mapping of a student's progression through the PhD Program is found in [Appendix 2](#). It provides a typical timeline of responsibilities, activities, key forms, and deadlines.



Academic Standards

Michigan State University is committed to high academic standards and expects all graduate students to excel in their particular majors. The successful completion of the Doctor of Philosophy degree requires scholarly ability of a high order.

The standard established by the College of Social Science is that a doctoral student may earn grades below 3.0 (including N grades in the P–N grading system) in not more than two of the courses required by the guidance committee.

In order to successfully complete their degree, a student in the PhD Program in social work must successfully complete their required coursework. The minimum cumulative grade point average required for graduation is a 3.0.

The PhD Program in social work requires that a student achieve at least a 3.0 in each of the core courses (SW 900, SW 901, SW 905, SW 911, SW 912, SW 920, and SW 930) and the additional required statistics courses. A student who earns a final grade below 3.0 in any of these classes

must register for the class again, re-take it, and earn a 3.0 or better. In addition, the student, instructor (when available), and PhD Program Director will meet to discuss the grade and provide any needed assistance.

Grades are only one measure of academic standing. Academic standards also include consideration of the student's suitability for conducting research, competency in their major field, and rate of progress toward completion of the degree.

Academic Performance

GRADING

Grading in each course is based on evaluation by the instructor of a student's academic performance. Students are informed of all course requirements and grading criteria at the beginning of each course. Grading criteria for each course are included in the course syllabi. The University uses a numerical grading system, a supplemental credit-no credit system, and a limited pass-no grade system. There are limitations on the amount of course work that can be completed on the credit-no credit system and the pass-no grade system. The credit-no credit and pass-no pass systems are only available for courses that are specified as having either of those grading systems. Students are directed to consult the instructor if they have questions about grading.

All grades submitted by instructors are final. They cannot be changed by re-examination or by submission of additional work.

Grade Criteria

Numbered grades represent categories of performance as follows:

Table 4: Grades and Descriptions

Grade	Description
4.0	Excellent
3.5	Good
3.0	Passable
2.5	Low
2.0	Lowest
1.5-0.0	No credit given
I	Incomplete
DF	Deferred
CR-NC	Credit-No Credit
P-N	Pass-No Grade

University and College Policy: Academic credit is awarded at the minimum level of 2.0 for doctoral students. Credit is not awarded by the University for grades below 2.0 in graduate courses. The minimum cumulative grade point average required for graduation is a 3.0.

A doctoral student may earn grades below 3.0 (including N grades in the P–N grading system) in not more than two of the courses required by the guidance committee (course in GradPlan). If the cumulative grade point average of a student who holds a graduate assistantship (GA) drops below a 3.0, the GA will be forfeit and the student can be automatically dismissed from the PhD Program.

School of Social Work Policy: The School has additional grade requirements for its doctoral students; please see the next section.

Grade Point Average and Passing Grades in Social Work Courses

The School of Social Work PhD Program requires that a student achieve at least a 3.0 in each of the core courses (SW 900, SW 901, SW 905, SW 911, SW 912, SW 920, SW 930) and the additional required statistics courses. A student who earns a final grade below 3.0 in any of these classes must register for the class again, re-take it, and earn a 3.0 or better. In addition, the student, instructor (when available), and PhD Program Director will meet to discuss the grade and provide any needed assistance.

If there are concerns with a student's performance in the GA and/or their academic performance, the PhD Program Director will call for an [Academic Standing and Student Review](#) (ASSR) meeting.

I-Incomplete Grades

When special or unusual circumstances occur, the instructor can postpone assignment of the student's final grade in a course by submitting an Incomplete in lieu of a grade. I-Incomplete (I) grades are given only when *all* of the following are true:

- The student has completed at least twelve (12) weeks of the semester, but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reasons
- The student has done satisfactory work in the course
- In the instructor's judgment, the student can complete the required work without repeating the course.

Compelling reasons include only:

- Illness or injury that makes it impossible for the student to complete course work and are documented by a physician's written statement attesting to the serious nature of the condition
- Illness or injury of a close relative for whom the student is responsible for providing daily care and documented by physician's written statement attesting to the serious nature of the condition

Provided these conditions are met, the instructor files a Report of I-Incomplete at the time course grades are due. This specifies what the student must do and by when it must be done to remove the I-Incomplete grade. The student and instructor must complete, sign, and submit the [University Agreement for Completion of \(I\) Incomplete form](#) to graduate office staff where it will be retained for at least one year.

Removing Incomplete Grades: All required work must be completed and a grade must be reported to the Office of the Registrar no later than the middle of the student's next semester in attendance (summer session excluded) if that semester is within one calendar year following receipt of the I-Incomplete. The exception to this deadline is that an instructor can submit an Administrative Action form stating that course structure necessitates delay of make-up grading until the end of the student's next semester in attendance.

Failure to complete: Failure to complete the required work by the due date will result in a grade of I/0.0, I/NC, or I/N, depending on the grading system under which the student was enrolled. It

is the student's responsibility to complete the course work and submit it to the instructor, allowing adequate time for the instructor to grade the work and submit the grade to the Registrar by the stated deadline. A student who does not register for MSU classes subsequent to the receipt of an I-Incomplete has one calendar year to complete the required work; after one year, the I-Incomplete will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to I/U on the student's academic record. The course may be completed only by re-enrollment.

Extensions: An extension of time for completion of the required work can be approved by the College offering the course only by means of an Administrative Action form documenting physician-certified illness or other extraordinary circumstances such as those for which an initial I-Incomplete grade is given as described previously. An extension of time is a formal agreement between the instructor and the student. After an extension of time has been filed, the work must be done by the deadline determined by the instructor or the I-Incomplete will be changed to I/0.0, I/NC, or I/N depending on the grading system under which the student was enrolled.

DF-Deferred Grades

When special or unusual circumstances occur, the instructor can postpone assignment of the student's final grade in a course by submitting a DF-Deferred in lieu of a grade. A deferred (DF) grade applies to the numerical, the CR-NC and P-N system. Deferred grades are given to students who are doing satisfactory work but cannot complete it because of reasons acceptable to the instructor. The required work must be completed, and a grade reported, within two calendar years. If not completed within the time limit, the DF-Deferred will be changed to DF/N. **This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.**

Repeating a Course

The University policy on repeating courses is:

...a graduate student who received a grade of 2.0 or, CR, or P in a course may not repeat the course on a credit basis with the following exception: with the approval of the assistant dean, a graduate student may repeat a course in which a grade of 2.0 or 2.5 was received. The number of credits that a graduate student may repeat is determined by the student's guidance committee, in accordance with unit policies.

The School of Social Work's policy is that a maximum of two, three-credit hour courses can be repeated. Whenever a course is repeated on a credit basis, the last grade and credits earned completely replace the previous grade in computing grade-point averages; however, all entries remain a part of the student's permanent academic record.

Any course repeated for credit must be taken on the same grading system under which the course was taken the first time. A student will be given only one opportunity to repeat a course.

RESEARCH BY STUDENTS

All student-initiated research and grant applications must have oversight from a tenure-track faculty member. Notify the SSW Ph.D. program director of intent to apply for student-initiated applications.

Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects

Whenever students have a class that includes research utilizing human subjects, they must consult with their instructors to determine whether they must go through a review of their projects by the [Human Research Protection Program](#) (HRPP). Under the regulations, research is defined as a formal investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. A human subject of research is an individual (1) from whom an investigator obtains data by interaction or intervention or (2) about whom the researcher obtains confidential information. Definitions and rules regarding research with human subjects can be found on the [HRPP website](#).

The [Human Research Protection Program](#) website has many resources for protecting human subjects participating in research. Its web-based [Human Research and Protection Program Manual](#) contain policies and procedures that apply to all of MSU's human subject research activities regardless of funding support or location where the research will be conducted (i.e. domestic, international). The policies and procedures apply to the human subject research activities conducted by employees of MSU (faculty and staff), by students of MSU, by agents of MSU (i.e., individuals engaged by MSU to conduct human subject research on behalf of MSU), or by individuals conducting research at entities that have a formal written agreement with MSU for review and approval of their human subject research.

Institutional Review Board Office (IRB)

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office has its home in the [MSU Human Research Protection Program](#) (HRPP). The IRB review process is done in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations, University policies, and ethical standards. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) specific to the IRB review processes are available on the web at <https://hrpp.msu.edu/help/faqs.html>.

No research can be conducted without IRB review and approval. Doctoral students conducting research must do this **with a faculty advisor** who can help initiate and oversee the IRB and the research process as a whole. The Graduate School will not accept dissertations containing research on human subjects that have not been reviewed and approved previously by HRPP.

Even if the research is likely to exempt, the student must apply to IRB in order to show that the proposed work has been processed by the IRB. A letter verifying this exemption would be sent to the student and faculty advisor. An exemption letter from the IRB is needed for submitting to the Graduate School for IRB determined exempt research.

Federal and University regulations require that all research projects involving human subjects be reviewed and approved by an IRB before initiation. In addition, anyone engaged in human research overseen by MSU must complete the human research protection training (HRPP/IRB Certification).

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) Plans

Each department at MSU also offers additional coverage of research and research ethics through its Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) Plan. The School of Social Work's plan focuses on ways students can obtain information about research ethics through a variety of

sources, including courses (e.g., the coverage of research ethics in SW 900, SW 911, and SW 912), specific RECR Lunch and Learn sessions, the doctoral student orientation in the fall, discussions of research ethics with faculty, and workshops and online trainings offered by the Graduate School. The IRB website provides access to CITI module trainings. Students are required to complete a certain number of annual hours of RECR training.

The Graduate School website lists [minimum RECR plan requirements](#) for doctoral students:

- CITI Modules Year 1
 - Introduction to the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research
 - Authorship
 - Plagiarism
 - Research Misconduct
 - 6 hours discussion-based training (by completion of the degree)
- CITI Modules Year 2
 - Complete 3 additional from specific list
- Year 3 forward
 - 3 hours of annual refresher training

[The PhD Program website lists more specific information on the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research \(RECR\) Plan for social work doctoral students.](#) As part of the annual progress report, students are required to submit a record of the RECR training they received over the past year. This record is maintained within the student’s Grad Plan online record within Campus Solutions. Grad Plan trainings are also noted in the student annual progress report.

General Authorship and Research Guidelines

Students may find the following resources helpful as they begin to think about selecting a chair, conducting research in an ethical manner, and publishing:

- [MSU Guidelines On Authorship](#)
- [Graduate School Website On Research Integrity](#)
- [MSU Institutional Data Policy](#)
- [University Policies on Academic Performance, Integrity and Safety in Research and Creative Activities](#)



Teaching During the Doctoral Program

TEACHING CONTENT INCLUDED IN COURSE WORK AND ACTIVITIES

The art and practice of teaching are discussed in some of the core social work courses, especially SW 900. Beyond the experience of teaching during your doctoral program, our goal is to prepare you for a deeper understanding of your teaching philosophy and for developing elements of a teaching portfolio. Therefore, we provide content to enhance teaching expertise. For example, in the Doctoral Proseminar (SW 900) there is content on developing teaching portfolios and in Knowledge Construction (SW 901) there is content on developing a teaching philosophy.

Availability: Within the last several years, the SSW MSW program experienced a drop in enrollment, leading to less courses available for teaching mentorship and assignment. Additionally, course teaching assignments are finalized almost a year in advance. If you are interested in a teaching mentorship and/or assignment start talking to your Guidance Chair and Program Director in spring of year two or fall of year three. This will not guarantee a teaching mentorship or assignment but makes it clear in advance that you have an interest in applying. It is also possible to seek out teaching opportunities in other disciplines or professions that align with one's expertise, e.g., psychology, women's studies, criminal justice, sociology, health sciences, and interdisciplinary social sciences. Some students propose teaching elective social work summer courses (must be approved by Guidance Chair and Ph.D. Program director). Some of our current students teach at other university social work programs.

Please note that some of our students teach for MSU social work courses in their fifth year in the program. Teaching skills can be enhanced using a plethora of activities as indicated below.

Other Teaching Skills Building Opportunities: In addition, Lunch and Learn sessions often include instruction and information about teaching. The Program Director and/or Graduate Program Coordinator regularly send announcements of teaching seminars and learning opportunities offered by the University. The [Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation](#) offers regular opportunities for building teaching skills and students can also elect to complete a [Teaching Certificate](#). Students are encouraged to lecture and present in undergraduate and graduate courses.

CODE OF TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY

Course instructors must adhere to MSU guidelines for teachings. They can be found at: https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/fas-policies-procedures/academic_responsibilities.html

TEACHING MENTORSHIP

For students that have not had an opportunity to teach, or those with limited experience in a particular area of teaching, we offer a one semester mentorship with a seasoned faculty member in the School who collaborates with them as the course is prepared and taught. The experiences are tailored around existing and needed skills and content. Students receive feedback on their work and have the opportunity to process the experience and better understand how to teach a course. Attention is paid to both explicit and implicit aspects of good teaching, so that creating and sustaining a context of social work values in the classroom and in presentation of material may be emphasized. In this mentorship, the student shadows the professor during the semester, with ongoing meetings to discuss classroom process, content, and the evaluation of assignments. Students develop their plan of learning with their mentor based on their individual needs; however, students can expect to deliver at least one lecture and participate in grading.

It is strongly recommended that students complete their required courses and have successfully completed their comprehensive examination before pursuing a teaching mentorship. Follow the procedures **of requesting teaching opportunities with a written request to the SSW Program Director and notification of RA Supervisors.** This includes summer teaching opportunities.

To request a mentorship, first talk with your chair for suggestions and think about the curricular area you are interested in (e.g., policy, research, HBSE, micro or macro practice) and then make a formal written request to the PhD Program Director (email is fine). The PhD Program Director will then make recommendations to the associate director of the School, who does the course scheduling. Students must request a mentorship a year in advance so that the details can be worked through. As part of your development as a teacher, it is strongly recommended that you take at least two courses offered by the [Academic Advancement Network](#) (AAN) during the semester of your teaching mentorship; the AAN website lists information on available courses, workshops, and other resources. We offer a small stipend to students participating in a teaching mentorship.

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP (TA)

A teaching assistantship (TA) may be included as part of your overall funding package for that academic year. Teaching as a TA is subject to the rights and regulations negotiated by the Graduate Employees Union (GEU). [The GEU has its own website](#). A pdf file of the current collective bargaining agreement between Michigan State University and the Graduate Employees Union, Local 6196, AFT-Michigan/AFL-CIO can be found there.

International Students

MSU has a policy that candidates for TA appointments who were required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to Michigan State University must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students.

To meet this requirement, those International Teaching Assistants may use any of three options listed below:

- Presenting a TOEFL iBT speaking section score of 27 or higher.
- Receiving a score of 50 or higher on the [MSU Speaking Test](#)
- Taking [AAE 451](#) or [AAE 452](#) (ITA language support courses) and receiving a score of 50 or higher on the [ITA Oral Interaction Test \(ITAOI\)](#).

Individual exceptions from these requirements (on a case-by-case basis in rare circumstances) will be considered by the Graduate School in consultation with the ELC upon the request of the department and with the endorsement of the Associate Dean of the College.

[The MSU policy affecting international teaching assistants \(ITAs\) can be found on this webpage](#). There are resources for ITAs located on the [International Teaching Assistant Program website](#). Specific information about [hiring international students](#) can also be found in the Student Employment Manual.

TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS

It is strongly recommended that students will have completed their required courses and have successfully completed their comprehensive examination before they begin teaching. Since the comp exam is typically completed during the student's third year, this generally means that a

student would be eligible to begin teaching in their fourth year. If a student has not taught before, a successful teaching mentorship is a prerequisite. As with the request for a teaching mentorship, requests for teaching assignments must be made in advance of the year you would like to teach. **Such requests are made in writing to the PhD Program Director (email is fine), who will then make recommendations to the Associate Director of the School who does the course scheduling. Notice of teaching requests should also be shared with the student's RA Supervisor.**

As a student with a GA (graduate assistantship), are a student is eligible to teach beginning their fourth year in the program. If they do not have a GA for the relevant academic year, they may teach as a course instructor. Summer semester teaching is generally subject to different rules. Please **talk with the PhD Program Director** for further information if you are interested in teaching during the summer. **Should students wish to teach additional courses, the same process should be followed with a written request to the Ph.D. Program Director and notification to the student's RA supervisor.**

TEACHING CERTIFICATE OFFERED BY THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

MSU's [Certification in College Teaching](#) is an initiative of the Graduate School, in partnership with the College of Social Science. It is designed to help graduate students organize and develop their teaching experience in a systematic and thoughtful way, with assistance from faculty and campus offices and programs. Applications and acceptance into the program can be arranged through the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies within the College.



Student Conduct

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Michigan State University affirms the principle that all individuals associated with the academic community have a responsibility for establishing, maintaining, and fostering an understanding and appreciation for academic integrity. Academic integrity is the foundation of university success. Learning how to express original ideas, cite sources, work independently, and report results accurately and honestly are skills that carry students beyond their academic career.

[The Academic Integrity at MSU flyer defines several types of academic misconduct.](#) See also section 1.00 under [General Student Regulations in the Spartan Life Student Handbook](#). Another good portal for MSU policies regarding academic honesty and integrity can be found through the Office of the University Ombudsperson (<https://ombud.msu.edu/>).

Misconduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program. The pertinent academic policy included below is the Academic Standing and Student Review (ASSR).

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is defined by the University as any one of the following: academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records.

Academic dishonesty at Michigan State University is defined by the [General Student Regulations](#) as conduct that violates the fundamental principles of truth, honesty, and integrity. In addition to plagiarism, the following conduct is specifically cited:

- claiming or submitting the academic work of another as one's own
- procuring, providing, accepting, or using any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization
- completing or attempting to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization
- allowing any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization
- altering, tampering with, appropriating, destroying, or otherwise interfering with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person
- fabricating or falsifying data or results

Academic dishonesty in professional education is not tolerated. Not only are such behaviors against Michigan State University principles related to academic integrity, but they violate the NASW Code of Ethics (<https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics/code-of-ethics>) MSU Policy: [Integrity of Scholarship & Grades](#)

Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities

The [MSU Research Integrity Office](#) states:

Safeguarding the integrity of research and creative activities is fundamental to the mission of Michigan State University. We owe no less to the public which sustains institutions like ours and to the governmental agencies and private entities which sponsor the research enterprise. All members of MSU share responsibility to assure that misconduct or fraud in research and creative activity is dealt with effectively and that MSU's exacting standards for scholarly integrity are preserved.

Moreover, the University has explicit obligations to federal agencies to safeguard research integrity. In seeking funds from these agencies, the University is required to establish and abide by uniform policies and procedures for investigating and reporting instances of alleged or apparent misconduct involving research and related activities.

Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities

The University has developed a set of Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities. These procedures apply to all members of the University community, including students, who engage in Research and Creative Activities. [The full document delineating Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities procedures is available in pdf format.](#)

Also see: [Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)

Plagiarism

At MSU, [General Student Regulation 1.00](#) states, in part, that “no student shall claim or submit the academic work of another as one’s own. Plagiarism may be accidental or blatant or self-plagiarism. However, students are held to the same standards whether or not they knew they were plagiarizing or whether or not they were plagiarizing themselves or someone else.”

[Detailed information about plagiarism can be found on the Office of the University Ombudsperson website.](#)

PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

Professional integrity involves conducting oneself in a professional manner in courses, graduate assistantships (research or teaching), and all other contexts in which the student is engaged in an MSU-related function or role or is representing MSU. More detail about this can be found in the Academic Standing and Student Review (ASSR) and Non-Academic Review (NAR) sections in this handbook.

Professional and Ethical Behavior

The [NASW Code of Ethics](#) applies to all social workers and social work students and as such sets expectations for students’ professional and ethical behavior while in the PhD Program. Students are expected to read the [Code of Ethics](#) and be familiar with and prepared to abide by the ethical principles and standards described.

Professional and ethical behavior in the University context applies not only to work with clients, but to interactions, relationships, or communications with fellow students, faculty, staff, field liaisons and instructors, and all others within the University or with whom students have contact in their role as an MSU doctoral student. This includes interactions, relationships, or communications in person or via the use of technology.

Students are expected to treat their MSU colleagues with respect and avoid unwarranted negative criticism in verbal, written, and electronic communications. This includes demeaning comments that refer to level of competence or individual attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability.

Policies on Discrimination; Disability and Reasonable Accommodations; and

Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct

Discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct will not be tolerated. Reasonable accommodations are expected for students with disabilities.

This link will lead you to the MSU [Anti-Discrimination Policy \(ADP\) manual](#).

[This link will lead you to the MSU Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)

All employees, including graduate assistants and research assistants, are required to complete online Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) training every two years.

This link will lead you to the MSU [Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct](#)

Another site with detailed RVSM information is called Prevention, Outreach, & Education at <https://poe.msu.edu/index.html>

FALSE INFORMATION

Fraud and misrepresentation include, but are not limited to:

- False statements in applications for financial aid
- Identifying oneself as a student in the School of Social Work without being officially registered and/or paying fees
- Falsifying degrees or professional credentials to clients or agencies
- Falsifying University class-hour commitments or schedules to any employer or field agency
- False statements in application materials

See also [section 5.00 under General Student Regulations in the Spartan Life Student Handbook](#).

Such conduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary action including dismissal from the School of Social Work.

ADJUDICATION

Adjudication of cases of violation of academic or professional integrity, academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of admissions and academic records follows the steps described in [Article 5 of the Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#) document found online.



Academic Policies and Procedures

ACADEMIC POLICIES

All students enrolled in the academic programs of the School of Social Work are held accountable to academic regulations specified by the School, the College of Social Science, the Graduate School, and the University in effect at the time they are admitted.

Registration

Students can consult the PhD Program Director and/or their Guidance Committee Chairs about their academic programs when they have questions about program requirements prior to course registration. Students need to enroll as soon as possible to avoid being locked out of sections of courses. Students can enroll for spring semester classes when they enroll for the fall semester. The School guarantees a seat for all required classes.

Overrides

A student who wants an override to get into a closed section of a class must secure the permission of the course instructor. There is no guarantee that an override will be granted when the section is at its maximum capacity. Instructors make these decisions because the number of students in their sections has a strong impact on the class dynamics and the faculty member's resources. If the course is taught by an adjunct instructor, permission for override is granted by the Associate Director. The Associate Director will exercise judgment with regard to balance and size of sections taught by adjunct instructors. Overrides in other departments or programs must be sought through the office of the Graduate Program Director in each department.

DEPARTMENTAL STUDENT RECORDS

Application Materials

All application materials of matriculated students, except official transcripts and School and University applications, will be kept in an application file accessible to the student's advisor/guidance committee chair, the PhD Program Director, and other faculty on an as-needed basis. It will be destroyed upon graduation. Non-admitted applicant materials be kept for one academic year and then will be destroyed. Students have the right to view their own application materials except for any letters of recommendation that have been designated as confidential. To view this file, the student needs to make an appointment with the graduate program support staff.

Academic File

The student's academic file will be available to the student's advisor/guidance committee chair, the PhD Program Director, and other faculty on an as-needed basis. In special circumstances, when additional confidentiality is required, academic folders will be kept in the director's office. Students have the right to view this file. To view this file, the student needs to make an appointment with the graduate program coordinator.

The typical PhD student's academic file has three sections that include the following information:

- **Key Forms:** Grade reports and other pertinent information concerning grades (i.e., notices from the Dean's Office about grade issues), administrative action forms, admissions information (i.e., the acceptance letter from the School), recommended action form, dissertation proposal contract, record of comprehensive examination, and record of dissertation.
- **Annual Reports:** annual progress reports, reports of the guidance committee, research internship forms, any amendment forms, and the dissertation committee members' progress report form.
- **Miscellaneous:** Miscellaneous information pertaining to student's academic progress such as leave of absence requests, awards and fellowship forms, PhD Program application, official academic transcripts (undergraduate and graduate), and termination-separation checklist.

Graduate Employees Union Personnel Records

If students are hired as employees in the School to teach, their employment is covered by the Graduate Employees Union/Michigan State University (GEU/MSU) contract. Their personnel records will be stored in a separate file, as outlined in the contract and the [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#) (GSSR) document. The file may include graduate student instructional rating reports (or summaries), formal written evaluations, and/or any supplementary information.

Only information pertaining to the student's employment status will be in the personnel record file. This information may be used by the student or faculty members for such matters as renewal of assistantships, teaching assignments, recommendations, and the need for further training.

Students have the right to access this file up to three times per year. Students have a right to have a copy of all or part of their personnel record, with costs incurred in copying assessed to the student. Students have the right to place a written response to any evaluation contained in their personnel record.

The School business manager maintains all personnel records. Students need to make an appointment if they wish to view these files. For additional information about the GEU, including the current GEU/MSU contract, please go to [the Graduate Employees Union at MSU website](#).

Student Personnel Records

Students may be hired through the graduate assistantship process or on an hourly basis. Their employment is covered by the [Student Employment Manual](#). State and federal law provide guidelines for handling personnel records. Specific information about [hiring international students](#) can also be found in the Student Employment Manual.

Students have the right to access their personnel file. Students have a right to have a copy of all or part of their personnel record, with costs incurred in copying assessed to the student. Students have the right to place a written response to any evaluation contained in their personnel record.

The School business manager maintains all personnel records. Students need to make an appointment if they wish to view these files.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENTS

University Policy

Absent a need to know, the University generally does not release student information to third parties, including parents, without the student's written permission. There are limited exceptions to these operating guidelines (such as health and safety emergencies), depending on the circumstances of a particular case. The following MSU website provides detailed information regarding the University's policies on student records: [This MSU website provides detailed information regarding the University's policies on student records](#).

The release and disclosure of student records maintained by the University is, in large measure, governed by state and federal laws and by University policy. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) restricts the School and individual faculty members from releasing information concerning a student's academic record.

School of Social Work Policy

The School of Social Work adheres to the University's policies pertaining access to and release of student academic records.

Students who want the School and/or individual faculty members to provide letters of reference or recommendation that include details from the student's academic record, such as a grade in a course, must complete, sign, and return a release of information authorization to the Graduate Support Office. This form will then be filed in the student's permanent academic record. It can be amended and/or terminated at any time. It is recommended that the individual faculty member keep a copy of the FERPA release for their own records. [Pertinent FERPA forms and links to other relevant information can be found on the Registrar's website.](#)

GRADUATION

Certification for Graduation and the Degree Audit in SIS and/or GradPlan

Certification for PhD candidates follows the procedures established by the Graduate School and the Registrar. Please see <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/> for more information.

The certification process consists of an assessment of the student's academic record, via the Grad Plan degree plan in the Campus Solution system. In order for the PhD Program Director to approve the degree, the degree audit must also be complete in GradPlan. If the student does not meet the program or degree requirements and/or does not have a completed degree plan and degree audit in the Campus Solutions system or GradPlan, the final degree will not be approved, and the student cannot graduate and earn the PhD.

Graduation Ceremonies

The University holds commencement ceremonies at the Breslin Center in May and December. Graduate students from all disciplines participate in this event. It is a traditional graduation ceremony open to all graduate students who are graduating from MSU that semester. Students finishing their requirements during the summer may participate in the May or December ceremonies. It is possible that the College of Social Science may host a ceremony celebrating doctoral graduates.



Conflict Resolution

STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Academic grievance procedures are used for graduate students to resolve a dispute with an instructor, grieve a grade given in a course, or to grieve other violations of student rights as outlined in the [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities \(GSRR\)](#). Student grade grievance procedures are covered in the next section of this handbook.

The general procedures for conducting a hearing for students are outlined in [Article 5 of the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and through [the Office of the University Ombudsperson](#). The School of Social Work, the College, and the University take student grievances seriously and have a number of processes in place to address complaints. In accordance with the GSRR, the School of Social Work MSW Program has established Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating graduate student academic grievances and complaints. [The School-level hearing procedures for graduate student academic grievances can be found on the School website](#). The student also may consult with the University Ombudsperson at any stage of the dispute.

Appeals must be justifiable. Either party can appeal. An appeal is a review of the record for procedural and due process issues. It is not a fresh hearing or an opportunity for introduction of new issues. Appeal of a School decision is made to the College of Social Science. The parties are directed to consult the MSU publication, [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#) for further information concerning grievance procedures.

Students are encouraged to start this process with informal resolution through discussion with instructor and, if necessary, the relevant administrator/s within the School of Social Work. Students are encouraged to review relevant University policies or procedures. If this informal process does not resolve the situation or the student strongly believes, and has evidence to substantiate, unfair treatment or treatment that diminishes the student's rights, the student can begin more formal grievance procedures. The student may consult with the University Ombudsperson at any stage of the dispute.

In accordance with the GSRR, the School of Social Work PhD Program has established Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating graduate student academic grievances and complaints. Either party may appeal a decision by the hearing board to the College hearing board for cases involving academic grievances alleging violations of student rights and alleged violations of regulations involving academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, professional standards or falsification of admission and academic records). The following websites have related information:

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gsrr/GSRR.pdf>

<http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities>

<https://ombud.msu.edu/resources-self-help/for-graduate-students/request-grievance-hearing>

STUDENT GRADE APPEALS PROCEDURES

The [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) document establishes general rules for grade appeals for students. Policies for grade appeals are found on the Office of the Ombudsperson website: <https://ombud.msu.edu/resources-self-help/for-graduate-students>

Students are encouraged to start this process with informal resolution through discussion with instructors and, if necessary, the relevant administrator/s within the School of Social Work. . Students may start by reviewing their grades. If there is evidence that a simple math error has

been made in calculating the grade, an appointment with the instructor to review the matter would be the next step. Absent a math error, the student can still meet with the instructor to clarify the grade and, if necessary, the relevant administrator/s within the School of Social Work.

Students are encouraged to review relevant University policies or procedures. If this informal process does not resolve the situation or the student strongly believes, and has evidence to substantiate, unfair treatment or treatment that diminishes the student's rights, the student can begin more formal grievance procedures.

In most formal grade appeals, the student has the burden of proof that the instructor used what the Student Rights and Responsibilities document calls "inappropriate or irrelevant factors" in determining the final course grade, instead of a "good faith" judgment of performance. Such factors might include race, sex, or personal animosity. Grounds for a viable grade grievance do not include disappointment with a grade, hard work that was not rewarded, nor an instructor's very high standards.

Appeals must be justifiable. Either party can appeal. An appeal is a review of the record for procedural and due process issues. It is not a fresh hearing or an opportunity for introduction of new issues. Appeal of a School decision is made to the College of Social Science. The parties can consult the MSU publication, [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#) for further information concerning grievance procedures.

ACADEMIC STANDING AND STUDENT REVIEW (ASSR)

Definition

Students are expected to maintain acceptable academic standing (i.e., meet the requirements for passing grades and cumulative GPA outlined in this handbook, for their GA as outlined in their GA offer letter, and in terms of professional conduct.) If a student is struggling in terms of maintaining acceptable academic or professional standards, an ASSR will be required. This process is designed to be helpful to students while balancing the need to protect the academic standards of the School and the ethics and standards of the social work profession.

The ASSR is not a student complaint or grievance procedure. If a student believes that a grade(s) has been assigned unfairly or their student rights have been violated, the student may initiate an informal complaint or formal grievance as covered in the student academic and grade grievance sections included above.

The ASSR is initiated by faculty or the PhD Program Director on behalf of a student whose academic problems are threatening their status as a student in the School. Note that some situations will result in automatic dismissal from the PhD Program, with no ASSR process.

Reasons for Calling an ASSR

An ASSR is called to determine whether or not the student can continue in the program, provided that specified remedies are found. The table below provides examples of events that can trigger an ASSR, possible steps a student must take to address the situation, and consequences of not completing the steps. In some cases, the PhD Program Director will

recommend that a student develop and complete a plan in order to stay in the program; in other cases, the student will be asked to leave the program or be dismissed.

Table 5: Examples of Reasons for Calling an ASSR

Examples of Precipitating Events	Possible Student Steps to Rectify the Situation	Consequences of Not Completing Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student’s performance in GA is poor and student is struggling in course work (e.g., has earned a grade lower than 3.0). • Student GPA is below 3.0. • Student has earned below a 3.0 in more than 1 core course. 	<p>Student may lose GA or be required to take steps to improve performance during the next semester; student is required to re-take course and earn a grade of 3.0 or better.</p>	<p>Student will be dismissed from the program.</p>
<p>In the opinion of any faculty member, a student is experiencing difficulty that threatens their academic progress.</p>	<p>Student must present a plan describing how academic performance will be improved within a specified time period. The plan must be approved by the ASSR members. The plan may include taking a leave of absence in order to attend to difficulties. The student must follow the plan and complete course work, attaining grades of 3.0 or above.</p>	<p>Student will be dismissed from the program.</p>
<p>Allegations of unethical conduct made by any student or faculty member require an ASSR. Appropriate actions beyond the School will be taken if indicated.</p>	<p>If allegations are not substantiated, student will be able to remain in the program and must strictly adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics and MSU and School of Social Work standards described in Student Conduct sections of this handbook.</p>	<p>If allegations are substantiated, student will be dismissed from the program. Depending on the misconduct, appropriate authorities will be notified.</p>

ASSR Process

Typically, the ASSR meeting will be called by the PhD Program Director. A faculty member may also call the review meeting. The student's advisor/chair and classroom instructor (as appropriate) will be asked to attend the meeting. The student is expected to attend and can bring an “advocate supporter” who must be someone from the University community, e.g., a faculty member or another student. The support person will not have an active role in this proceeding and is not allowed to participate verbally. If the student refuses to attend the ASSR, the meeting will still be held.

The process is designed to be informal and non-adversarial. After exploring the situation, the PhD Program Director, in consultation with participants, will make a recommendation. The recommendation will be formulated in a written report of the hearing submitted to the student and to the director of the School, who could concur, modify, or reject it. The recommendation

may include placing the student on probation pending the successful completion of the recommended plan, strongly recommending that the student voluntarily leave the program permanently or temporarily (i.e., take a leave of absence for a specified time period), or dismissing the student from the program. The student is able to appeal or dispute the recommendation to the director of the School. The director's factual review will look at the information presented, and the process used to make the determination.

The report and recommendation will be kept in a confidential folder available only to the director of the School, Ph.D. Program Director, and the student's Advisor/Chair. It will not be used in a reference letter or any other similar document. The student may write one addendum to the report.

NON-ACADEMIC REVIEW (NAR) AND INFORMAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Because social work is a profession, social work students must also demonstrate that they possess the qualities necessary to become social work educators and researchers, in addition to successfully completing their academic work. Although it happens only on rare occasions, there are times when faculty members feel strongly that a particular student does not possess these qualities. In that event, a non-academic review is called to talk with the student about their status in the PhD Program.

There are two major reasons for non-academic review:

- 1) failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity, or emotional stability required for professional practice, or inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward School colleagues, faculty, or staff
- 2) consistent failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional relationships; as doctoral students are not in the field during their studies, the rare instances in which this might happen would be primarily in a classroom setting or when participating in research (e.g., in their role as a graduate assistant or while engaging in dissertation research)

Should it be determined that a student meets either of the reasons, the PhD Program Director will typically call a non-academic review meeting. A faculty member may also call the review meeting.

The meeting will typically be attended by the student, PhD Program Director, chair/advisor, and other faculty who have voiced concerns about the student. The student can bring an "advocate-supporter" who must be someone from the University community, e.g., a faculty member or another student.

The student will be asked to speak about the concerns and to provide any evidence that would dispute the information that was provided to the PhD Program Director. The PhD Program Director will make a determination about whether the student must withdraw or will be dismissed from the PhD Program. If the student disagrees with the determination, they can present information to the director of the School who will either uphold or overturn the determination. The director's factual review will look at the information presented, and the process used to make the determination.

Occasionally, the PhD Program Director will call a meeting with students, faculty, and/or administrators to attempt to resolve a specific student problem without invoking the formal ASSR process. These meetings are designed to promote the informal resolution of issues. If the meeting does not produce a resolution or if the student does not meet the conditions agreed upon in the meeting, an ASSR will be the next step.

AUTOMATIC DISMISSAL FROM THE PHD PROGRAM

Certain situations, as outlined in this student handbook, will result in automatic dismissal from the PhD Program:

- failure to successfully complete an acceptable comprehensive examination proposal
- failure to pass the comprehensive examination
- failure to complete the dissertation within the 8-year time limit (without applying for and receiving an extension)
- Grades below a 3.0 in more than 2 courses listed in a student's GradPlan

In cases of automatic dismissal from the program, an ASSR will not be called.

UNIVERSITY OMBUDSPERSON

The [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#) was established to assist students in resolving conflicts or disputes within the University. They also help staff members, instructors, and administrators sort through university rules and regulations that might apply to specific student issues and concerns. In addition to helping members of the MSU community resolve disputes, they also identify MSU policies that might need revision, and refer them to the appropriate academic governance committee.

These duties are carried out in a neutral, confidential, informal, and independent manner. The University Ombudspersons are not advocates for any individual or group on campus; instead, they are advocates for fairness. Talking to an Ombudsperson does not constitute filing a formal complaint or notice to the University, since the purpose of the University Ombudsperson's Office is to provide a confidential forum where different options may be considered.

An Ombudsperson will also assist students who want to file formal complaints and grievances, which is often the final step in a student's effort to resolve a dispute. There are systems in place at MSU to receive and hear a student's formal grievance. Which system is used depends on the nature and location of the grievance. Although it is not required, a consultation with a University Ombudsperson is strongly recommended before entering a formal complaint or grievance in the appropriate system.

The University Ombudsperson does not provide legal service, represent students or instructors at academic grievance or disciplinary hearings, or mediate disputes between or among faculty or between faculty and administrators.

The [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#) is a good source for links to policies and procedures related to problems, complaints, grievances, and academic integrity.



Student Involvement in the School of Social Work

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

We hope that students will participate in the governance and life of the school and the program. Doctoral students can be representatives to School meetings, on the doctoral program committee, the educational planning committee, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, and several other ad hoc groups, including search committees. Students do not have voting rights. Any doctoral student who is teaching, or assisting in teaching a course in the School, will be invited to sit on the sequence committee that is responsible for the particular course.

LUNCH & LEARN RESEARCH AND TEACHING SERIES

Faculty from the School of Social Work and from related disciplines present seminars of interest on research and teaching topics. These are held periodically throughout the academic year (dates are in the school calendar and typically distributed via the listservs) and are advertised by posted flyers. Students are encouraged to attend and present. Students receiving Graduate Office Fellowship and SSW funding for research are expected to present at Lunch & Learn.

DOCTORAL STUDENT MEETINGS

The PhD Program schedules at least one meeting per semester for all doctoral students to meet together with doctoral program committee members for discussion, information sharing, and networking. **Attendance at these meetings is required for all doctoral students.**

STUDENT GROUPS

Michigan State University has [more than 800 student-run Registered Student Organizations](#) (RSO) on campus. They include professional organizations, clubs with a cause, political organizations, and many more. RSOs cover a wide range of topics and interest areas, including but not limited to: Greek fraternities and sororities, academic, business, environmental, international, political, racial/ethnic, national origin, religious, women's interests, health, and sports and leisure as well as the intersections of these with minority/protected groups.

The [Council of Graduate Students](#) (COGS) is the authorized student government on campus representing all graduate/professional students at Michigan State University. Their mission is to promote the academic, social, and economic goals of graduate and professional students. COGS accomplishes its mission through advocacy, innovative programming, and collaboration with other student organizations and the academic and administrative units of the University.

School of Social Work Groups: See the School of Social Work Student Connect page at <https://socialwork.msu.edu/students/index.html>

- **Student Organization of Latino Social Workers (SOLASW)**—a student-run organization for Latino Social Work students and their allies at the BSW, MSW, and PhD level. Students participate in service activities that benefit Latino communities, fundraising, educational mentoring supports, and professional activities such as attending Latino focused conferences.

SOLASW also provides support and mentoring to Latino students at MSU. SOLASW membership is open to Latinos and allies.

- **Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW)** student chapter—this group provides social and academic support for Black students in the MSU School of Social Work. Activities include mentorship and professional support, and members attended the ABSW annual conference. ABSW membership is open to Black social workers only.
- **Phi Alpha National Honor Society**—its purpose is to provide a closer bond among social work students at all academic levels and promote humanitarian goals and ideals; it seeks to foster high standards of education of social work through the recognition and promotion of scholastic excellence and fellowship among social work students. Students are admitted by invitation only.

MSU EMAIL ADDRESS

The University provides each student with a free email account at the time they are admitted to MSU. The School and the University use these accounts to communicate with students.

It is imperative that all social work students access their MSU email account on a regular basis to receive information about school events, course offerings, course schedule changes, job and volunteer opportunities, and other important information.

It is also critical that students do not allow their mailboxes to become full, or any emails sent will be returned. Important links include:

- [Instructions on how to activate MSU NetID and email](#)
- [Guidelines and policies regarding MSU student email communications](#) including:
 - [Acceptable Use Policy & Resources](#)
 - [Appropriate Use of Email Services & Resources](#)
 - [Cloud Computing Guidelines & Resources](#)
 - [Copyright Information & Resources \(DMCA, HEOA\)](#)
 - [Institutional Data Policy & Resources](#)
 - [Student Computer Requirement](#)
 - [Web Accessibility Policy & Guidelines](#)
- [Login page for MSU email](#)

PHD STUDENT LISTSERV

The School has a listserv for our doctoral students: phdlist@list.msu.edu. This listserv provides a venue for disseminating information about School events, reminders, and discussions of relevant topics. You will be subscribed to the list prior to the start of your first year in the program. **A reminder:** When you want to respond to the person who sent the message to the listserv, do not use the reply function, because this sends the reply to the entire list. Use the forward function and type in the sender's email address.

STUDENT MAILBOXES

Student mailboxes are located in hall on the second floor of Baker Hall. It is highly recommended that students check their mailboxes often for information from the School.

LEMOYNE SNYDER COMPUTER LABORATORY AT 521 BAKER HALL

This computer lab is available to students at the School of Social Work. Hours of operation are posted in the computer lab. MSU, IT manages and supports more than 400 technology classrooms and computer labs across campus used by students, faculty, and staff.

- [This link gives you detailed information about what is available](#)
- [This link gives you locations, hours, and printer information by lab location](#)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Professional social work vacancies are posted throughout the School and sent out on the social work student listserv. A job book with employment postings is kept in the graduate resource office, Room 235. Faculty vacancies for other universities and colleges are posted on a bulletin board outside Room 235.

CONFERENCE ROOMS: 221 AND 241 BAKER HALL

The conference rooms are used by faculty and students for various types of meetings, including guidance and dissertation committee meetings. Students can schedule this room in the main office 254 Baker Hall.

PHD STUDENT OFFICE SPACE

The PhD student shared office space is located on the first floor of Baker Hall. There are computers and desk space available for study. This is a shared office space and items provided by the School must remain in the office. Do not leave valuables in the office. You will need to request a key from the business office manager to use this office space.



Financial Aid and Assistantships

SOURCES OF FUNDING

These are the main sources of funding for PhD students:

- School of Social Work for graduate assistantships (GAs)
- School of Social Work for university fellowships (UFs)
 - University Distinguished Fellowships recognize academic achievement, research goals, demonstrated leadership potential, and contribution to a diverse educational community
 - University Enrichment Fellowships recognize academic achievement, research goals, contribution to a diverse educational community, and a record of overcoming obstacles
- University Office of Financial Aid for federal loans and work study
- Dean's Assistantships, College of Social Science
- Academic Achievement Graduate Assistantships (AAGA), <https://grad.msu.edu/aaga/>

In general, GAs and UFs are awarded to qualified incoming students at the time of admission, although some assistantships may become available during the student's time in the program. Highly qualified, research-focused students will be guaranteed five years of GA support.

Students who need additional financial assistance can contact the MSU Office of Financial Aid, at: www.finaid.msu.edu . Early application for aid is recommended.

MSU's [Office for International Students and Scholars](#) (OISS) provides support to Michigan State University's international students, scholars and families and they have [information about financial support](#).

The following websites have useful information about financial aid and other resources. Students are also encouraged to talk with advisors about potential sources of fellowships, scholarships, etc.

Financial Aid Information and Resources

- [FAFSA - Free Applications for Federal Student Aid](#)
- [University Financial Aid Information Page](#)
- [Scholarship News \(search by race, ethnicity, etc.\)](#)
- [Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program](#)
- [Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers Foundation](#)
- [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)
- [Council on Social Work Education Scholarships and Fellowships](#)

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Academic and Location Requirements of Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistantships that are supported by the School are obtained as part of the student's funding package upon admittance to the PhD Program. *Within the SSW Ph.D. program, the term Research Assistant is used interchangeably with Graduate Assistant.* Research/Graduate

assistants are enrolled students whose primary goal is to complete an advanced degree. GAs must show progress toward earning a degree as a condition of maintaining the assistantship.

Location: Please note that it is required that the student reside in Michigan in order to qualify for a GA/RA.

GA Evaluation: Students' performance in their GA role (including UF recipients) will be evaluated and monitored by the PhD Program Director at least once per year, if not more frequently. Input from the student and GA supervisor is included in the evaluation.

If students are not satisfactorily performing their GA responsibilities (as evaluated by their GA supervisor and/or the PhD Program Director) or failing to meet general academic and professional expectations as stipulated in their GA offer letter, their GA can be terminated.

Note: Those students who are assigned a teaching assistantship (TA) are covered by the contract negotiated by the Graduate Employee Union. The GEU and MSU have a collective bargaining agreement that covers the stipends, benefits and working conditions for teaching assistants; see the [handbook section on teaching](#) and the [GEU website](#) for more information.

Social work provides assistantships based on available funds and match between the student and faculty area of need. Graduate assistantships provide tuition reimbursement, health insurance and a stipend. The PhD Program Director must make recommendations for an assistantship appointment; the director of the School approves these. Graduate assistantships are available to graduate students who are actively pursuing degree programs. A graduate assistant must be registered as full-time for each semester in which s/he holds an assistantship.

Assistants are appointed on a quarter-time (10 hours/week), half-time (20 hours/week), or three-quarter-time (30 hours/week) basis for 18 weeks each fall and spring semester and for 12 weeks for summer semester. Per MSU policy, GAs are hired at three different levels (1, 2, or 3), depending on qualifications and prior experience as a GA.

- Level 1 requires admission as an MSU grad student, a bachelor's degree, and less than two semester's experience as a GA or full-support fellow
- Level 2 requires admission as an MSU grad student, a master's degree, or at least two semester's experience as a GA or full-support fellow
- Level 3 requires admission as an MSU grad student, a master's degree, and at least six semester's experience as a GA. To be a Level 3 GA, it is also required that you have successfully passed your comprehensive examination.

See the MSU Human Resources website for more [information about GAs](#) and [GA FAQs](#). Also, updated information about graduate assistantships can be found on the [MSU Graduate School website](#)

Assignment of Research Assistants to Faculty

The PhD Program Director assigns a Research Assistant's duties, in consultation with the Doctoral Program Committee and the Director of the School. Research assistants may be assigned to one or more faculty members.

Assistantship Renewal

By April 15th of each calendar year the School will notify each graduate assistant in writing of one (or more) of the following

- that her/his assistantship will be renewed for the following academic year
- that the assistantship will be renewed provided the assistant is able to meet certain (specified) conditions
- that the assistantship will be renewed provided that the School is able to meet certain (specified) conditions
- that the assistantship will not be renewed for the following academic year.

If the assistantship is not renewed, the reasons for non-renewal will be given to the student.

UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED AND ENRICHMENT FELLOWSHIPS

These competitive awards are offered by the Graduate School to up to 40 incoming graduate students across campus. The Fellowships is part of the SSW offer of five years of funding, including two fellowship years and three GA years. The PhD Program Director must formally nominate students during the application process. For more information, please see the [Graduate School webpage](#).

Students who have received University Fellowships will be evaluated and monitored by the PhD Program Director at least once per year, if not more frequently.

GRADUATE OFFICE FELLOWSHIP (GOF) FUNDS

Each year, the School is given funds from the Graduate School that are designated for graduate students for such things as conference travel and research support. Each fall and spring the PhD Program Director will send out an email to PhD students about the GOF funds available for the academic year and summer, respectively. Interested students will make their requests at that time. Students must be enrolled and in good academic standing to receive funds.

ADDITIONAL TRAVEL AND CONFERENCE FUNDS

Both the College and the Graduate School offer additional opportunities for obtaining funds for research and presenting at conferences. [Information and an application can be found on the Grad School website](#).

DISSERTATION COMPLETION FELLOWSHIPS

For students nearing the completion of their degree requirements, the College of Social Science offers a competitive scholarship. The Dissertation Completion Fellowship (DCF) is applied for in the semester prior to the semester of completion. Dates for submission are available from the PhD Program Director. Applications need to be approved in writing by the dissertation chair with emphasis on demonstrating that completion is likely within the next semester.

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTION AND FIELD LIAISON

Doctoral students, with sufficient teaching and/or practice experience, may be offered part-time employment in the School of Social Work. This work is time-limited to either a semester (i.e., in the case of a specific course) or an academic year (i.e., in the case of field liaison work). Students interested in either of these opportunities can contact the PhD Program Director.

FEDERAL DIRECT STAFFORD LOANS

Most students who file the FAFSA will qualify for the Direct Stafford Loan, either subsidized or unsubsidized. The loan amount will vary depending on the student's academic level and need. Interest **does not** accrue on a subsidized loan until the student graduates, leaves school, or drops below half-time enrollment. Interest **does** accrue on an unsubsidized loan while the student is in school, but payment of the interest may be deferred until payment of the principal begins, or the student may choose to pay while in school. Additional information can be found at the [Office of Financial Aid website](#).

MSU LOANS

The [Office of Financial Aid website](#) has [information about short term loans](#) available at MSU. Sources include: MSU, ASMSU, and COGS.

PERKINS LOANS

Perkins Loans are available to some high-need students. Students who qualify based on their enrollment on data gathered on the FAFSA will be offered the Perkins Loan. The Perkins Promissory Note will also be mailed to these students and must be returned to MSU before the loan can be disbursed. The principal and interest are deferred while the student is in school.



Appendix 1: General Reference

University policies included in the following documents override all inconsistent provisions of the particular departmental handbooks:

- [Academic Programs Catalog](#) lists academic programs, policies, and related information; together with Course Descriptions, they comprise the Michigan State University catalog. This provides an abundance of information and is worth your time to browse through it.
- [General Student Regulations address a number of student and student group expectations and protections.](#)
- [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#) (GSRR) is a major compilation of policies located within Part II of the Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide. It specifically addresses student conduct, academic pursuits, keeping of records, and publications. It describes procedures for formulating regulations governing student conduct and for providing due process in the adjudication of student disciplinary cases. It also defines channels and procedures for student complaints and grievances. [A pdf file of the GSRR can be downloaded from this link.](#)
- **Graduate Employees Union (GEU) Contract:** Teaching as a TA is subject to the rights and regulations negotiated by the (GEU). The [GEU website](#) has a link to a pdf file of the collective bargaining agreement between Michigan State University and the Graduate Employees Union, Local 6196, AFT-Michigan/AFL-CIO.
- **Student Employment Manual:** Found on the MSU Human Resources website, this provides information related to hiring and working with student employees not covered by the GEU contract. [General information about student employment is found on this webpage.](#)
- [Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships](#) was developed to highlight that effective faculty mentoring of graduate students and postdocs about research and scholarly integrity is of fundamental importance for ensuring quality research and scholarship in all disciplines
- [Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#) was developed to emphasize that quality research/scholarship is conducted with integrity.

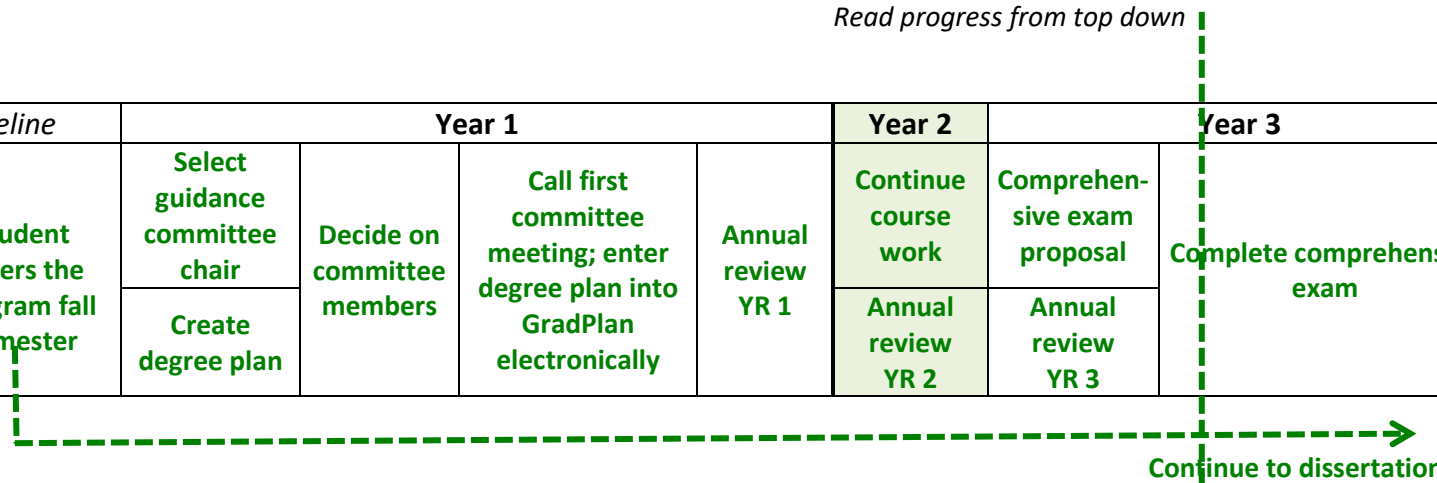


Appendix 2: Progression to PhD Timeline



Read progress from top down

<i>This is a typical timeline</i>		Year 1				Year 2	Year 3	
Student's Responsibilities	Student enters the program fall semester	Select guidance committee chair	Decide on committee members	Call first committee meeting; enter degree plan into GradPlan electronically	Annual review YR 1	Continue course work	Comprehensive exam proposal	Complete comprehensive exam
		Create degree plan				Annual review YR 2	Annual review YR 3	
Faculty Responsibilities		Assist with degree plan	Assist in selecting committee	Approve GradPlan degree plan (done electronically via routing from FTU system)	Assist with annual review	Assist with annual review	Evaluate comp exam proposal	Evaluate comprehensive exam
						Assist with annual review	Assist with annual review	
Forms/tasks to be completed by student & submitted to SSW grad secretary		Degree plan	N/A	GradPlan degree plan gradplan.msu.edu complete & submit online	Progress Report for annual review YR 1	Progress Report for annual review YR 2	Progress Report for annual review YR 3	MSU form: Record of Comprehensive Examinations for Doctoral Degree & Educational Specialist Degree Candidates
Due dates for forms & activities		By the end of the first semester	By the end of the first academic year	Recommended by end of first academic year; Max: fall semester of second academic year	End of first year	End of second year	End of third year	Submitted after student successfully completes comp exam; Recommended spring of third year; Max: within 5 years of beginning the PhD Program



Years 4-5						
	Dissertation work			AR	IRB	Finish
Student's Responsibilities	Complete & defend dissertation proposal & contract	Work on & submit dissertation	Complete dissertation defense (oral examination)	Annual review YRs 4 & 5	IRB closure by expiration date	Complete GradPlan degree audit & required forms; these steps MUST be completed in order to graduate

Complete the program with PhD

Faculty Responsibilities	Chair works with student on proposal; all members sign Dissertation Proposal Contract at end of proposal meeting	Chair works with student on dissertation before it goes to committee; all read dissertation	Conduct dissertation defense (oral examination) & sign Record Of Completion Of Requirements at end of successful defense	Assist with annual review	Assist with IRB closure by expiration date	Sign Approval Form
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Forms to be completed by student & submitted to grad secretary <i>Bolded Italic Forms are mandatory</i>	SSW form: <i>Dissertation Proposal Contract</i>	N/A	MSU form: <i>Record of Completion of Requirements</i> (Record of dissertation & oral examination requirement for PhD degree candidates)	<i>Progress Report</i> for annual review YRs 4 & 5	MSU form: <i>IRB Closure Form</i>	MSU forms: <i>Application for Graduation Approval Form</i> Obtained from & submitted to Registrar Obtained from and submitted to Grad School
Due dates for forms & activities	Completed at conclusion of dissertation proposal defense	Typically, during the fourth, & perhaps fifth, year	Completed at dissertation defense (oral examination) & submitted to grad office ASAP; Recommended by end of fifth year; Max: 8 years after beginning the program	End of fourth & fifth years	Prior to expiration date	Completed within first week of semester student intends to graduate; see Important Dates on Registrar's School Calendar webpage for deadlines



Appendix 3: Guidelines for Independent Study Courses

The PhD course offerings in social work, as specified in the handbook, are designed to meet the needs of students, and to offer exposure to the core content areas of knowledge construction and epistemology; historical, philosophical, and ethical bases of social work; evaluation research and research methods; and policy analysis. In addition, students take six credits of statistics plus three credit hours of electives in social work and 12 credit hours outside of social work that create a 15 credit hour focused cognate or area of study.

The social work curriculum includes a number of courses at the 800 level that can be taken as electives as part of the focused cognate. In addition, students may elect to fulfill some of the focused cognate credit hours through an independent study. Independent study is highly individualized planned study not addressable through any other course format, proposed in writing by the student on a standard form, accepted for supervision by a faculty member, and approved by the student's academic advisor and the School at the beginning of the semester.

RESTRICTIONS ON INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES

All core courses (SW 900, 901, 905, 911, 912, 920, 930) and the two statistics courses must be taken as regularly scheduled courses. Therefore, independent study cannot be used as a substitute for them. Independent study may not be used primarily as a means of accommodating the student's schedule. Independent study is to be used as a means of augmenting a student's curriculum in a particular area where no scheduled course is offered. Independent studies may be undertaken as part of the student's overall plan of study only after discussion with their guidance committee. It is strongly recommended that no independent study courses be taken without a GPA of 3.25 or higher for social work required courses. Independent study must be part of the student Guidance Plan, the course needs approval from the Guidance Committee Chair.

NUMBER OF INDEPENDENT CREDITS ALLOWED IN LIEU OF COURSES

For the 15 focused cognate credits, there is no set number of credit hours that can be taken through independent study. However, only three of those 15 credits can be taken in social work.

In general, independent study is considered only when all of these conditions are true:

- no scheduled courses exist that cover the topics of interest to the student
- a student is interested in pursuing a topic in greater depth than is possible within a given course
- an instructor has expertise or interest and is willing to conduct the independent study course as a means of sharing that expertise with the students

NEGOTIATING THE PROCESS AND PRODUCT FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES

Independent study places additional burdens on the student and instructor. They must agree upon the topics to be covered, the sources of information (e.g., books, articles, lectures, videos, research), the work products or deliverables required of the student, and the method of grading. In addition, the instructor and the student must negotiate this agreement relative to the number of credit hours of the independent study. For example, University policy suggests that student spend three hours per week for every hour in class related to work for a specific course.

The School recommends that students meet with the instructor a minimum of four times during the semester for face-to-face contact or through e-mail consultations. Prior to the start of the semester in which the study will be undertaken (or during the first week of the term), the student will meet with the instructor to outline the proposed work and a timeline. The student will then have progress meetings with the faculty member at least two additional times during the semester and meet with them during the final week of the semester to discuss/present the final work product. It is the **student's responsibility** to establish and maintain contact with the instructor and to see that these meetings are set. It is the **faculty member's responsibility** to give the student timely feedback so that the work can be completed as negotiated. In taking an independent study in another department or school, it is the student's responsibility to find out if that department or school has additional or alternate meeting and work load requirements.

TIMING AND MINIMUM GRADE POINT AVERAGE REQUIRED TO TAKE INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES

Students must be able to judge how much work they can undertake in a semester and self-pace that work. Therefore, the doctoral program committee suggests that students have completed a minimum of one semester in the PhD Program and have a minimum GPA of 3.25 in order to enroll in an independent study.

PROCEDURE FOR ENROLLING IN INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES

Students are required to prepare a one-page outline or description of their proposed topic of study and what they intend to do during the independent study prior to approaching any faculty member. This can be used as the basis of the initial conversation and negotiation of topic and product.

Upon agreement between student and faculty mentor, the student will complete sections 1 and 2 of the "Application for Independent Study" form and secure the signature of the instructor indicating her or his willingness to supervise an independent study. This form is available from the front office at 254 Baker Hall or online at <https://reg.msu.edu/read/pdf/indestudyapp.pdf>

Once the form has been completed, it gets submitted to the graduate office support staff, who will provide the override for the student to enroll in SW 890 and give the student a section number for the independent study that corresponds to the supervising faculty member.

Note: It is the student's responsibility to find a faculty member with whom to work. It is also the student's responsibility to learn about the enrollment procedure in undertaking an independent study in another department or school. However, the doctoral program committee suggests

following a similar procedure in terms of drafting a one-page synopsis of the student's plan before seeking a faculty mentor. Students should notify their academic advisor and the Ph.D. Program Coordinator about independent study requests.

Appendix 4: Specializations, Certificates & Dual Degrees

Specific details about [specializations, certificates, and dual degrees can be found on the PhD Program website](#). These programs are subject to change or development. These programs are subject to change or development. These are the programs currently available:

Graduate Certificate in Chicano/Latino Studies: This specialization, through the [Chicano/Latino Studies \(CLS\) Program](#) prepares graduate students interested in the historical and current experiences of Chicanos and Latinos, with an emphasis on transdisciplinary, global, comparative, and applied approaches.

Graduate Specialization in Women's and Gender Studies: This specialization, through the [Center for Gender in Global Context](#) is designed to foster the study of women and gender across disciplines and national borders, provide opportunities for graduate students to obtain a comprehensive, cross/interdisciplinary academic experience in women and gender, and to foster the growth of interdisciplinary research and teaching on women and gender. Emphasis is given to understanding the diversity of women's lives nationally and globally.

Graduate Specialization in Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change: [This specialization](#) is sponsored jointly by the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the College of Social Science. Established in Fall 2000, it is the first of its kind in the nation explicitly focusing on the intersection of gender, environmental change, and social and environmental justice. The program is designed in particular to examine these issues and processes from both local and global perspectives, challenging traditional dichotomies between the Developing and Developed countries and the North and the South.

Graduate Specialization in Global Urban Studies: This specialization, through the [Global Urban Studies Program](#) is designed to offer students an opportunity to examine political, spatial, cultural, and economic processes and issues in urban areas across the United States and the world.

Opportunities in Public Health: The MSU College of Human Medicine (CHM) offers a fully online, 43-credit Master's in Public Health (MPH) Program which is currently pursuing accreditation by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). This area of study is offered through two options:

- **Dual Degree:** PhD in Social Work and Master's in Public Health
Students interested in pursuing dual enrollment must apply to and be admitted to each of the programs separately. Please talk with the PhD Program Director about the dual degree if you are interested in pursuing this. Dual degrees require approval from the College and University. Information about applying to the MPH program can be found at [the MPH degree](#)

[website](#) under the Program Information menu option. Current University policy on dual degrees can be found at <https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s407>

- **Core Disciplines of Public Health Graduate Certificate**

This certificate is designed for students interested in including public health content as part of their graduate studies who do not wish to pursue the dual degree. It provides students with a basis for understanding the breadth and scope of the public health field. A link to information about applying for the Core Disciplines of Public Health Graduate Certificate can be found on [the MPH degree website](#) under the Program Information menu option.



Appendix 5: Work Related Policies

Employment and Assistantships

RESIDENCE POLICY

Per MSU policy, one year of residence on campus after first enrollment for doctoral degree credit is required to permit the student to work with and under the direction of the faculty, and to engage in independent and cooperative research utilizing university facilities. A year of residence is defined as two consecutive semesters, involving the completion of credits at the level of full-time status of graduate work each semester (i.e., at least 6 credits each semester for two consecutive semesters after beginning the program). This specific language about the residency requirement is found on the Office of the Registrar website in the Academic Programs Catalog, specifically at <https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s393>.

ASSISTANTSHIPS

Detailed information for doctoral students holding graduate assistantships is found in various locations in the [Academic Program Catalog for Graduate Education](#). Also, the MSU Human Resources website has [information about GAs](#) and [GA FAQs](#). Selected highlights about graduate assistantships are included below:

- **International Students:** MSU has a policy that candidates for TA appointments who were required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to Michigan State University must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students.
 - The MSU policy affecting international teaching assistants (ITAs) can be found at <https://grad.msu.edu/tap/speak>.
 - There are resources for ITAs located on the International Teaching Assistant Program website: <https://elc.msu.edu/programs/ita/>.
- **Graduate Employees Union (GEU) Contract:** Teaching as a TA is subject to the rights and regulations negotiated by the (GEU). The GEU website is found at <http://geuatmsu.org/>. A pdf file of the collective bargaining agreement between Michigan State University and the Graduate Employees Union, Local 6196, AFT-Michigan/AFL-CIO can be found on their website.

- **[Student Employment Manual](#)**: Found on the MSU Human Resources website, this provides information related to hiring and working with student employees not covered by the GEU contract. [General information about student employment is found on this webpage.](#)
- **Graduate Assistant Health Insurance**: MSU provides health coverage for graduate assistants and their eligible dependents through Blue Care Network (BCN). As a graduate assistant, you are enrolled automatically in the health plan, and MSU picks up the cost of your health coverage. Through this plan, you have access to quality health care through hospitals, physicians, and affiliated health care professionals in the BCN provider network. <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/graduate-assistants/health/index.html>
- **Graduate Assistant leave time** for GAs covered by the Graduate Employees Union Contract can be found on the [GEU website](#).
- **Graduate Assistant leave time** (illness, injury, and pregnancy) for Graduate Assistants **not** covered by the Graduate Employees Union Contract can be found at [in this specific section of the Academic Programs Catalog](#)
- **Additional GA benefits** include:
 - Library privileges, intramural and recreation facilities privileges, and eligibility to join the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union.
 - Eligibility for student discounts on football, basketball, and/or hockey season tickets for themselves and their spouses.
 - Eligibility for free admission to other regularly scheduled Michigan State University athletic events when presenting a valid student ID card.
 - Eligibility for student discounts on series tickets to professional performing arts events at the Wharton Center for Performing Arts and Institute for Arts and Culture, including one guest ticket at the student rate.
 - Exemption from payment of the Social Security tax on the stipend if the student is enrolled for the minimum number or required credits. Stipends are subject to income taxes with few exceptions. The taxability of stipends is subject to review by the Internal Revenue Service. Please call the Payroll Office for more information 1-517-355-5010. Please note that tax laws are subject to continuing revision and students need to verify their tax liability each year.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)

The MSU Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) reviews all concerns at the University related to two MSU policies: the Anti-Discrimination Policy and the Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct. In addition, OIE reviews reasonable accommodation appeals under MSU's Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy. [Links to detailed information about these is found on the OIE Policies web page.](#)

- **Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP)** outlines the types of prohibited discrimination and harassment at MSU. Under the ADP, University community members are prohibited from engaging in acts which discriminate against or harass any University community member on the basis of age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status,

national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or weight. See https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/university-wide/ADP_policy.html

- **[Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct \(RVSM\)](#)** prohibits University community members from engaging in relationship violence, stalking, and sexual misconduct. The RVSM also describes the process for reporting violations of the policy, outlines the process used to investigate and adjudicate alleged violations of policy, and identifies resources available to members of the University community who experience relationship violence, stalking, or sexual misconduct. All employees, including graduate assistants and research assistants, are required to complete online Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) training every two years.
- **[MSU's Office for Civil Rights and Title IX website](#)** includes information on local and national resources available to reporters, claimants, and respondents; reference guides; news; campus initiatives, and the University's Title IX program mid-year and annual reports.
- **[Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)** prohibits discrimination and harassment against a qualified individual with a disability. The Policy describes the process for seeking reasonable accommodations to ensure equal employment opportunities and equal access to University programs, services, and facilities.
- **Disability Accommodations for Graduate Assistants:** Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs, and TEs) are both students and employees. They are thus eligible for disability accommodations in both of these roles, and these accommodations are provided through distinct documents coordinated by RCPD: Students receive VISAs (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations), or VISTAs (Verified Individualized Services and Temporary Accommodations). Employees receive SEADs (Statements of Employee Accommodation Determination). Graduate assistants can register for both situations using [RCPD's MyProfile portal](#).
- **Policy on Religious Observance:** It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith. <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/ReligiousPolicy.aspx>

Human Resources (HR)

MSU Human Resources (HR) offers high-quality services, processes, programs, and information to support faculty and staff. The HR website assembles and maintains current lists and versions of MSU policies related to employment. [Links to detailed information is found on their University-wide Policies and Procedures web page](#). These include:

- [Alcohol & Controlled Substances](#)
- [Anti-Discrimination](#)
- [Board of Trustees Ordinances](#) (links to Board of Trustees)
- [Bullard Plawecki Employee Right-to-Know Act](#)
- [Conducting Youth Programs on Campus: Minimum Operational Requirements](#)
- [Conflict of Interest in Employment](#)
- [Contractor Criminal Background Check Requirements Policy](#)(links to University Services)
- [Drug-Free Workplace](#)

- [Firearms](#)
- [Paid Medical Leave Act Policy](#)
- [Personnel File Guidance](#)
- [Project Pay](#)
- [Policy on Low Speed & Assembled Vehicles](#)
- [Social Security Number Privacy](#)
- [Tolerance & Civility](#)
- [University Events & Venues: Criminal Background Check Requirements](#)
- [University Reporting Protocols: Child Abuse, Sexual Assault, & Child Pornography](#)
- [Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct \(RVSM\)](#)

STATE OF MICHIGAN POLICIES

- **Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act** prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status, or marital status in employment, housing, education, and access to public accommodations.
- **Michigan Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act** prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and prohibits discrimination based on genetic information that is unrelated to individual's ability to perform the duties of a particular job or position.

FEDERAL POLICIES

- **Age Discrimination Act of 1975** prohibits discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications.
- **Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance and requires the facilitation of the employment of individuals with disabilities.
- **Title IV of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act** authorizes programs that provide student financial aid.
- **Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964** prohibits discrimination in the provision of services and employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or gender.
- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** prohibits discrimination against students and employees on the basis of gender; MSU employs a dedicated Title IX Coordinator with additional staff.



Appendix 6: University Services/Resources

GENERAL

- **[Graduate School](#)** provides resources and information for graduate and graduate professional students and postdocs including admissions information, academic resources, professional development, funding, and graduate student life (organizations, wellness, support, resources). This website is a hub for much of the technical and policy information needed to help you successfully navigate the program.
- **[Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide](#)** is a helpful resource guide to campus programs and services, and also includes rules, regulations, rights, and responsibilities that have been established in the interest of intellectual and personal development while protecting individual freedoms. It is published annually by the Department of Student Life in the Division of Student Affairs and Services.
- **[Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#)** (GSRR) is a major compilation of policies located within Part II of the Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide. It specifically addresses student conduct, academic pursuits, keeping of records, and publications. It describes procedures for formulating regulations governing student conduct and for providing due process in the adjudication of student disciplinary cases. It also defines channels and procedures for student complaints and grievances. [A pdf file of the GSRR can be downloaded from this link.](#)
- **[Academic Programs Catalog](#)** lists academic programs, policies, and related information; together with Course Descriptions, they comprise the Michigan State University catalog. This provides an abundance of information and is worth your time to browse through it.
- **[Course Descriptions](#)** lists academic programs, policies, and related information; together with Academic Programs Catalog, they comprise the Michigan State University catalog.
- **[Student Life & Engagement](#)** website provides links for and information on a broad range of issues important to students. "Student Life & Engagement website" with this link.
- **[Office of Financial Aid](#)** has information about sources of funding and processes as well as calculators. [Financial aid information specifically for international students](#) is found on the OISS website.
- **[Office for International Students and Scholars](#)** provides support to Michigan State University's international students, scholars and families including:
 - Advising on and facilitating compliance with U.S. immigration regulations.
 - Conducting orientations and other special programming that help international students and scholars integrate into and adjust to the academic, cultural, and social life of MSU.
 - Serving as a liaison with U.S. government agencies, foreign embassies, sponsors, and educational foundations that support international students and scholars.
 - Contributing to the internationalization of MSU by providing opportunities for growth through cross-cultural interactions
- **[College of Social Science Office of Graduate Studies](#)** is a central source of information and assistance for students in all departments and schools in the College.
<https://socialscience.msu.edu/graduate/index.html>
- **[Office of the University Ombudsperson](#)** was established to assist students in resolving conflicts or disputes within the University. They also help staff members, instructors, and administrators sort through university rules and regulations that might apply to specific

student issues and concerns. In addition to helping members of the MSU community resolve disputes, they also identify MSU policies that might need revision, and refer them to the appropriate academic governance committee. Their duties are conducted in a neutral, confidential, informal, and independent manner. The University Ombudspersons are not advocates for any individual or group on campus; instead, they are advocates for fairness. Talking to an Ombudsperson does not constitute filing a formal complaint or notice to the University, since the purpose of the University Ombudsperson's Office is to provide a confidential forum where different options may be considered.

Members of the MSU community may contact the University Ombudsperson in person ([Room 129 of North Kedzie Hall](#)), by e-mail (ombud@msu.edu), by phone (517-353-8830), or through the online [problem report form](#).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- [Office for International Students and Scholars](#) (OISS) provides support to Michigan State University's international students, scholars and families including:
 - Advising on and facilitating compliance with U.S. immigration regulations.
 - Conducting orientations and other special programming that help international students and scholars integrate into and adjust to the academic, cultural, and social life of MSU.
 - Serving as a liaison with U.S. government agencies, foreign embassies, sponsors, and educational foundations that support international students and scholars.
 - Contributing to the internationalization of MSU by providing opportunities for growth through cross-cultural interactions
- [Financial aid information specifically for international students](#) is found on the OISS website.

SAFETY

- [Graduate School on Safety and Security](#) lists MSU Policies relating to personal and community safety and respect available to support students in their work on and off campus:
 - [MSU Statement on Tolerance and Civility](#)
 - [Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct \(RVSM\)](#)
 - [MSU Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)
 - [University Policy on Alcohol & Controlled Substances](#)
 - [University Policy on a Drug-Free Workplace](#)
 - [Firearms Policy](#)
 - [MSU Commitment](#)
- **Emergency Alert System** of the MSU Police Department operates a [timely warning emergency notification system](#) through e-mail, text message and voice message to phones with campus safety warnings and information. The MSU campus also has an outdoor speaker system used to launch severe weather warning sirens and/or an audible message detailing actions to take. On the first Saturday of each month at 1:00 p.m., the severe weather warning sirens are tested and that includes a pre-siren and post-siren audible message to test the speakers
- [MSU Travel Clinic](#) promotes safe and healthy travel by providing counseling to travelers about appropriate vaccines and preventive medication. It supports students' international educational experiences by promoting safe and healthy travel.

- [General MSU safety resources](#) are found on the Graduate Studies Safety and Security website.
- **Active Shooter Situations:** Training is available through the [Graduate School](#), the [Council of Graduate Students \(COGS\)](#), and other units of the university.
- [MSU Safe Place](#) addresses relationship violence and stalking; located on the MSU campus, it serves students, faculty, staff, their spouses/partners, and non-affiliated members in the Greater Lansing area. They provide advocacy, emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, safety planning, information, and referrals to survivors of violence and their minor children. All support services are free and confidential. Additionally, we work to increase awareness about relationship violence and stalking through community education, outreach efforts, expert witness training, professional trainings, and consultation.
- [Our Commitment](#) is a dedicated website for fostering a culture of safety and respect regarding combatting sexual assault, improving patient care and safety, and protecting youths on campus. It has a three point focus:
 - RESPECT: Advancing a Culture of Respect, Awareness, and Compassion
 - PREVENT: Protecting Students and the Campus Community
 - RESPOND: Building a Safer, More Responsive Campus
 The website shares news and updates and resources, provides a place for comments and suggestions, and is a central location for the Healing Fund to support counseling and mental health services for the survivors of Larry Nassar.

TEACHING

- [Inside Teaching MSU](#) is a network and resource for MSU graduate students and postdocs dedicated to promoting teaching excellence through conversation and sharing practices.
- [Inclusive Teaching](#) is a website developed by MSU librarians in partnership with the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives to highlight research and resources focusing on inclusive teaching in the disciplines.
- **Code of Teaching Responsibility** is found in the [Academic Program Catalog](#)

EDUCATIONAL

- [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD) provides a broad range of programs and services to the MSU community for maximizing ability and opportunity for full participation by persons with disabilities. It is necessary to [identify and register a disability](#) to receive individual needs assessments, services, and accommodations from RCPD.
- [Office of the Associate Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School](#) serves as an advocate for graduate education to the university and beyond and works to enhance the quality of graduate education at MSU in all its diverse dimensions.
- [Writing Center](#) provides one-on-one and group writing consultations, various writing-specific workshops, and writing groups for graduate students and faculty interested in using writing to engage students in active learning and thereby in improving the quality and range of their students' literacy.
- [Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement](#), in partnership with campus and community, advances community engaged learning at MSU and prepares students for lifelong civic and social responsibility in an increasingly diverse and complex global society.

- [School of Social Work PhD Office](#) located in 239 Baker Hall is staffed by the graduate office support staff who provide information and help regarding registration, overrides, necessary forms, etc.

CAREER COUNSELING

School of Social Work

Students are encouraged to seek out faculty members to gain additional insights into careers as educators, researchers, policy analysts, administrators, etc. In addition, as faculty and staff learn of employment opportunities, students are notified through the student listserv and on the School bulletin boards.

Graduating doctoral students often meet as a group to talk about the job search process including preparing a professional vita and “job talks.” When students are invited for interviews, the School will assist the student in doing a practice job talk in order to get feedback from faculty and student colleagues.

MSU Career Services Network

The MSU Career Services Network (CSN) is available to all MSU students. Here the student can meet with career service professionals located in college-based and centralized career centers across campus, access career trainings, and find many more resources. Detailed information about their services can be found on their website. CSN has locations all across campus. This [link](#) will take you to the CSN website.

HEALTH

- [Olin Health Center](#) is the primary health care facility for MSU students and houses several departments including Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS), the Office of the University Physician, some Health Promotion services, and Health Services. Health Services and related support services include primary care, allergy/immunizations, sports medicine, massage therapy, laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, and physical therapy. Students also have the option of receiving primary care services in the Neighborhood clinics located in Brody, Holden, Hubbard and McDonnell halls. An appointment is necessary for most student health services at Olin and in the neighborhoods.
- [Counseling and Psychiatric Services](#) (CAPS) is MSU’s integrated program combining the clinical services of the Counseling Center and the Psychiatry Clinic under one roof, providing counseling and therapeutic services for all students and consultation to faculty, residence life, and other stakeholders on campus to address students’ developmental and mental health needs; co-located with physical health services in Olin Hall, the CAPS program includes counselors embedded in the residence halls and other mental health professionals across campus to provide education, prevention services, and outreach programs to MSU’s diverse student population.

SOCIAL

- [Office of Graduate Student Life and Wellness](#) provides tools, resources, and programs for graduate students, including a dedicated graduate student lounge and a broad range of health and wellness programs. The Office is a cosponsor of programs to help academic women connect and support each other, and to provide networking opportunities for student parents.
- [Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Resource Center](#) leads and collaborates on university-wide initiatives that prepare students to thrive in our diverse world and enhances the campus climate and support services for students marginalized by their sexuality, gender identity, and/or gender expression.
- [Student Veterans Resource Center](#) (SVRC) helps military personnel and their families quickly find and navigate information, resources, and professional staff that will support their success at MSU; MSU has earned gold status in the Veteran-Friendly School program created by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency.
- [MOSAIC: the Multicultural Unity Center](#) is a dedicated meeting space established as
- [Office for International Students and Scholars](#) provides a broad range of support to MSU's international students, scholars, and families; serves as a liaison with US government agencies, foreign embassies, sponsors, and educational foundations that support international students and scholars; and contributes to the internationalization of MSU by providing opportunities for growth through cross-cultural interactions.
- [Office of Cultural & Academic Transitions](#) (OCAT) supports individual students in their navigation of cross-cultural encounters, and in their own understanding, exploration, and development of cultural identity by bringing together individuals as well as groups of students from diverse racial, ethnic, international, and domestic backgrounds for meaningful interactions.
- [Student Food Bank](#) provides supplemental food and other necessities for students and their families who are in need of this type of support; it is the first food bank in the nation run by students, for students. It is staffed completely by students with two MSU staff advisors.
- **Emergency Funding:** The Graduate School has a limited amount of Emergency Funding available to graduate students for unusual or unforeseen emergency expenses. Information is available at: <https://grad.msu.edu/emergency-fellowship-funding>
- [Student Parent Resource Center](#) provides support, resources, and campus and community connections for all student parents and their families—on and off campus through graduation and beyond—to help non-traditional students achieve their goals, create two-generation success, and establish long-term connections with the University. The Coordinator of the Center, an MSW, also teaches in the School as per-course faculty.
- [Student Legal Services](#) is a student government sponsored program that provides FREE legal services for all eligible Michigan State University students through a private law firm consisting of attorneys, legal interns, and support staff, and sponsored by the [Associated Students of Michigan State University](#) (ASMSU) and the [Council of Graduate Students](#) (COGS).

UNIVERSITY RESOURCE LINKS

Resources provided by university-level units such as [OISS](#), [RCPD](#), [Student Affairs](#), [the Libraries](#), [the Olin Health Center](#), [Inclusion & Intercultural Initiatives](#), [the Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation](#), [the Writing Center](#), and [University Outreach & Engagement](#).

- [Diversity, equity, & inclusion programs](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Forms](#)
- [Funding](#)
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- [Research integrity](#)
- [Traveling scholar opportunities](#)
- [University Committee on Graduate Studies](#)