

Instructions for UW PhD in Social Welfare Application

Due Date: DECEMBER 1, 2024

Welcome to our guide for applying to the UW PhD in Social Welfare. Please pay careful attention to the application materials, requirements, and instructions noted in this guide. **To avoid following outdated guidelines, please be certain to use only materials for the current year, found at <https://socialwork.uw.edu/admissions/phd-application-instructions>**

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UW School of Social Work (SSW) Information

The University of Washington School of Social Work is recognized nationally and internationally for its innovative, broadly collaborative, and rigorous engagement with complex social issues. Hallmarks of the School include its leadership in identifying and addressing the [Social Work Grand Challenges](#); cutting-edge programs focused on issues of equity and justice; researchers skilled in prevention, intervention and policy research; development of indigenous methodologies; innovative educational programs; and the quality of its graduates.

Located in a rapidly growing, dynamic, and increasingly diverse urban setting, the School has strong interdisciplinary and community ties. Our faculty is ranked as top in the nation in terms of scholarship and research productivity. The School of Social Work is dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse, inclusive and pluralistic faculty, staff and student body committed to research, teaching and working in a diverse global environment.

Our School's equity and justice mission leads us to invest in recruiting students who in their scholarship, teaching, and service, demonstrate experience with, knowledge of, and sensitivity to the needs of culturally diverse and oppressed populations.

UW PhD in Social Welfare Program

The UW Social Welfare PhD Program is training the next generation of scholars and educators to integrate ethical concerns regarding equity and justice with sophisticated scientific thinking to craft solutions for the most complex and challenging social problems of our times. Our students learn cutting edge research methodologies that center intersections of race, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation and other marginal identities to identify strengths, vulnerabilities and opportunities for change that create meaningful change in communities. These commitments are nurtured in classroom environments in which doctoral students learn, teach and mentor others to impact all areas of social work practice and education.

Current doctoral students are learning how to use research and teaching to improve the lives of people experiencing structural oppression including immigrant, Indigenous, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth; elder LGB and trans communities; and child welfare and foster care participants. They are developing interventions at the individual and family level and influencing policy through studies on disparities between states and countries.

Scholars [graduating from our program](#) go on to jobs in academia and research-oriented think tanks, policy centers, and government positions.

It is important for applicants to know that this program is not a clinical doctorate. For people interested in clinical doctorates (DSW), please see the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work's description of [the difference between PhD and DSW programs](#) here.

Eligibility for Admissions to the PhD Program

The UW PhD Program in Social Welfare is an in person program and operates on a cohort model. Individuals are admitted to the program as first-year, full-time PhD students in **Autumn Quarter only**. Annual admission of new students into the Social Welfare PhD Program is limited, and the applicant pool is competitive. The School of Social Work does not accept transfer credits from other doctoral programs nor part-time applicants. Applicants who are selected for admission must meet the following guidelines:

- Completed a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) or a related field such as public health or public affairs;

- Show commitment to the goals of the profession of social work;
- Have a visible commitment to working in diverse communities;
- Demonstrate a capacity for rigorous research development;
- Maintained a GPA of at least 3.0 in their previous graduate studies.

Although an MSW is not required for admission, the Council on Social Work Education states the following about teaching in accredited programs: "Faculty who teach social work practice courses have a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and at least two years of social work practice experience" ([EPAS 3.2.2](#)). For those seeking employment in an academic social work program after graduation with a PhD, having an MSW is advantageous and is considered during the admissions process.

Completing the Application for Admission to the UW SW Doctoral Program

The application process provides you with the opportunity to fully present your past experiences, current strengths, and your future plans as a doctoral student and social welfare scholar. The application materials are intended to give the members of the faculty a comprehensive picture of your qualifications for admission to the Social Welfare PhD Program. **All documents are submitted online through the [UW Graduate School online portal](#). All files should be titled with your Last Name, First Name, Document Type (i.e., Transcript). All documents should have your Last Name, First Name and page numbers on each page.** A complete application packet consists of the following components.

- [Application for Admission to the UW Graduate School](#)
- SSW Application Questions
- GPA Calculations
- Statistics Preparation Prerequisite & Indication of Interest in Statistics Certificate
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Scholarly & Professional Statement
- Scholarly Writing Sample
- Letters of Recommendation (at least 3)
- Official Academic Transcripts
- English Proficiency Test Scores (for International Applicants from non-exempt countries)

Application for Admission to the UW Graduate School

The "**Application for Admission to the PhD Social Welfare Program**" is submitted directly [online](#) to the Graduate School as the first step in the application process. A fee of \$90 is required in order to submit the finalized application. The amount of this fee may be subject to change without notice and is not refundable.

All application materials are submitted via an online portal located at <https://grad.uw.edu/admissions/apply-now/>. For any questions regarding this process, please contact the Graduate School directly:

Graduate School UW Phone: 206.543.5929;
Email for US Applicants: uwgrad@uw.edu.

In general, properly qualified students who are graduates of the University of Washington or of other colleges or universities of equivalent accreditation and rank are eligible to apply to the Graduate School at the University of Washington.

SSW Policies

All potential applicants should review three important policies prior to beginning their application process. These policies are:

- [Essential Skills, Values and Standards of Social Work Professional Conduct](#)
- [UW and Social Work Policies](#)
- [Washington State Administrative Code Related to Unprofessional Conduct](#)

SSW Application Questions & GPA Worksheet

Applicants will be asked to select their research interests, GPA information, and statistics preparation prerequisite.

Applicants will be required to compute their GPA using grade points for undergraduate and master's separately directly on the application. If one of your schools uses a narrative transcript format, indicate that in the appropriate place on the application form.

As instructed on the [online application](#), below are the following instructions to compute your GPA for undergraduate and master's degrees separately.

Please total the number of grade points given for each course, then divide by the total number of graded credits.

The *total number of grade points/total number of graded credits* = **GPA**

Grade Points are determined by multiplying the point value for a grade in a class by the credit given for a class. If your transcripts do not list numeric grades, use the following point value for grades to assist in determining your Grade Points [Note: If your former institution uses either 5 or 3 to designate an A, it is important that you convert the notation to the 4-point scoring system.]

A 4.0	C+ 2.3	D- 0.7
A- 3.7	C 2.0	E 0.0
B+ 3.3	C- 1.7	F 0.0
B 3.0	D+ 1.3	
B- 2.7	D 1.0	

For example, a 3-credit class that was graded a B+ would be: $3 \times 3.3 = 9.9$ grade points for that class.

Please base your total number of graded credits on the most recent 90 quarter credits or 60 semester credits. Usually this consists of the last 2 years of full-time course work. Applicants should base the GPA on as close as possible to 90 quarter or 60 semester credits without going over that total. However, if you are currently in a master's program, use the credits to date, even if below the 90/60 to calculate your current grade point.

Do **not** include non-graded courses such as Credit/Non credit classes or incompletes in the formula.

For example: The most recent graded credits on review of the transcript equals 87. The total grade points from evaluating each graded class is 269.7. $269.7 \text{ grade points} / 87 \text{ graded credits} = 3.1 \text{ GPA}$ If you have taken a combination of quarter credits and semester credits within the last 2 years of full-time classes, then conversion to quarter or semester credits for the total must take place with a similar conversion in determining the grade points. Quarter credits are converted to semester credits by multiplying by $2/3$ (0.66). Semester credits are converted to quarter credits by multiplying by $3/2$ (1.5). For example: $50 \text{ quarter credits} \times 2/3 = 33.3 \text{ semester credits}$. And $30 \text{ semester credits} \times 3/2 = 45 \text{ quarter credits}$.

Please compute both your undergraduate and master's GPA below with the most recent quarters or semesters used to establish the GPA. If your institution does not use a 4-point scale, convert to a 4-point scale.

When computing your GPA for your *undergraduate* degree, include as close as possible to the final 90 quarter or 60 semester credits. When computing your GPA for your *graduate* degree, include as close as possible to 90 quarter or 60 semester credits (must be the most recent credits earned).

Statistics Preparation Prerequisite & Indication of Interest in Statistics Fellowship and Certificate

Students entering the PhD program must have successfully completed an introductory undergraduate-level statistics course within the last five years. This requirement refers to courses that identify the learning of statistical theory and statistical methodologies as their main purpose and substantive content, as opposed to courses that might include some infusion of selected content on statistical methods. It is not necessary to have already met this prerequisite to apply to the program. The prerequisite can be satisfied any time prior to entering the University.

The statistics prerequisite course should cover topics such as:

- levels of measurement
- sampling theory
- probability theory
- univariate statistics
- bivariate statistics (correlations, T-tests, Chi-Square)
- basic graphic expression and interpretation

Students who have an interest in developing their statistical skills have the option of indicating their interest during the admissions process. The UW SSW is part of the [UW Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences](#) which offers specialized coursework and certification for doctoral students studying advanced statistics. This Center offers the [Blalock Fellowship](#) to incoming doctoral students across the social sciences.

If you are interested in being considered for this fellowship or the certificate program, please discuss in your Scholarly & Professional Statement how advanced statistical training could be beneficial for advancing your research goals. Please ask the people who write your letters of recommendation to also comment on your statistical, research and mathematical skills.

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

A curriculum vitae is a specialized listing of activities and experiences pertinent to academic work. [See this link](#) to understand the differences between a CV and resume. Upload a full CV that provides your relevant educational, research and employment history including school and agency addresses, your job title(s), and your dates of attendance or employment. If there is substantial discontinuity in your employment experience, please explain on a separate page attached to the CV. The CV should also list all scholastic or related honors (with dates received), significant volunteer activities, membership in professional organizations, and all published work. In addition, include research assistant activities, data and statistical analysis skills, bachelor or masters theses, papers presented at conferences, and other professional writings such as institutional manuals.

Scholarly and Professional Statement

The Scholarly and Professional Statement is your opportunity to explain who you are and your research and teaching goals in a narrative format. We are looking for specific information that will allow us to assess your potential as a candidate for admission to the Social Welfare PhD Program and your fit with our faculty mentors. Since the program emphasizes both research and teaching and has an explicit equity and justice orientation, we are interested in understanding your experiences relevant to these goals.

Please be as specific as possible in answering the questions below. Use no more than five (5) double-spaced typewritten pages. Applications that exceed these limits will not be considered for admission. These four questions should be answered in the form of a narrative and not as individual short answers.

1. Discuss your background, qualifications and readiness for pursuing doctoral studies in social welfare. In doing so, provide examples of your ability in the following areas:
 - a) prior academic, intellectual and scholarly accomplishments,
 - b) connection to issues of importance to the social work profession.
2. Describe your experiences with research and the questions you hope to address as a social welfare scholar.
 - a) How does your social work or other work experience inform your research priorities?
 - b) How will your research goals inform practice or policy?
 - c) What is the connection you see between your research efforts and the profession's commitments to equity and justice?
 - d) In what ways do you see our doctoral program and the UW as a good fit for your research goals? Please identify any research projects and social welfare PhD faculty - or faculty in other departments within UW - who you might be interested in working with. Please discuss if you have met with these faculty prior to the application process.
3. Explain how your personal and professional experiences, your cultural and educational opportunities, and any structural or systemic issues you have faced inform your research interests and commitment to equity and justice.
4. Describe your career goals after you complete your PhD. How do you expect to use the research and scholarly skills developed in the doctoral program after you graduate?

Scholarly Writing Sample

Submit one example of your scholarly writing that provides evidence of your capacity to think analytically and critically, and to express yourself clearly and concisely. Your written work should demonstrate your readiness to undertake doctoral level work that reflects a concern with the advancement of equity and justice. If you submit a co-authored article, please select one for which you had major writing responsibility and indicate in an attached note the parts of the writing that reflect your input and work. The following are examples of appropriate submissions of scholarly writing:

- a. Published article, chapter, book
- b. Master's thesis
- c. Unpublished research report, conference presentation
- d. Term paper written in a graduate course
- e. Training manual
- f. Grant application
- g. Legislative testimony

Letters of Recommendation

When you submit your application to the Graduate School, you will need to identify at least three individuals (and their email addresses) who can provide letters of reference in regards to your academic abilities, research capacity and commitment to issues of equity and justice. Four letters are recommended and five is the maximum. The Graduate School system will automatically send each person a notification of request for reference with individualized URLs for response. Those providing references can quickly and easily submit online in any of several formats. At least three of the persons writing the references, should be professors, researchers, academics or persons who can speak to your orientation to issues of equity and justice and who can evaluate your capacity to perform independent scholarly study.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 permits admitted students to review all pertinent documents in their records, including letters of reference. When you submit your list of names to the Graduate School, you will be required to indicate whether you waive that right.

Academic Transcripts

Copies of an **unofficial transcripts** from each undergraduate and graduate institution attended must be submitted online as pdfs. If you are admitted to the program and decide to accept the offer, you will then be required to provide official transcripts for the Graduate School from your master's degree institution.

If you are enrolled in a graduate program at the time you submit your application, you must send updated transcripts or grade reports for computation of your grade point average upon completion of the degree.

Additional Information for International Applicants

The School of Social Work welcomes students from around the world. We advise international applicants to submit their application to the Graduate School well before the due date because of the time required for processing international applications. This site has more information for international applicants:

<https://grad.uw.edu/admissions/understanding-the-application-process/international-applicant-information/>

An international student is anyone who IS NOT a US citizen or does not hold a US Permanent Resident Visa (i.e., "Green Card"). Individuals who hold a US visa, such as F-1 students, exchange visitors, or any other non-immigrant classifications are considered international applicants. International applicants must use the Graduate School website to determine eligibility for applying to the University of Washington and the School of Social Work PhD Program in particular.

Graduate School English Language Proficiency Requirements – Policy 3.2

A satisfactory command of the English language is required for admission to the University of Washington Graduate School. Applicants whose native language is not English must demonstrate English proficiency by **meeting/surpassing the “recommended” scores** to satisfy the Graduate school’s English Language (ELP) requirement.

We will accept TOEFLi, TOEFLB, Duolingo, or IELTS scores, please see chart below. A minimum score of 92 (TOEFLiBT/TOEFLTmBT), 125 Duolingo, or 7.0 (IELTS) is required for application and admission to the School of Social Work PhD Program in Social Welfare. Test scores are valid for two years and must be valid on the date the application is submitted. For additional information and ways to satisfy Graduate School English Language Proficiency Requirements Policy 3.2, please visit the Graduate School’s [website](#).

	TOEFL iBT	TOEFL MyBest	Duolingo	IELTS
Recommended Score (ELP Satisfied) - effective starting Winter Quarter 2025 admissions	92 or higher	92 or higher	125 or higher	7.0 or higher

[Test of Spoken English to Teach at UW – Graduate Policy 5.2](#)

The School of Social Work expects most students to be engaged in teaching assistantships during their doctoral studies; therefore, we **require** all incoming international students to meet English language proficiency and spoken English language requirement before being allowed to teach. The Graduate School requires that students achieve a score of at least 26 on the speaking section of TOEFLIBT or 7.0 on the speaking section of IELTS. For additional ways to satisfy spoken English language requirement, please visit the Graduate School's website ([memo 15](#)).

Financial Requirements

The US State Department of Justice and US Immigration and Naturalization Service mandate all schools to verify certification of adequate financial support from each international student. See the Graduate School website: <https://grad.uw.edu/admissions/understanding-the-application-process/international-applicant-information/financial-ability-requirement/> for the estimated total cost of study. When the full application is submitted, all international applicants must fill out and submit the University of Washington Statement of Financial Ability form.

Graduate appointments awarded by degree programs are considered authorized employment. The School of Social Work works with students to ensure financial support in the form of 9-month research or teaching appointments or fellowships from within the University of Washington or from external sources for at least the first 4 years of the doctoral program. These appointments will satisfy the majority of the annual (12-month) financial requirement; applicants are required to provide proof that they have supplemental support.

Special Required Materials for International Applicants

1. For both the TOEFL and TSE, registration forms or previous score reports less than 2 years old may be requested from the [Educational Testing Service](#), Princeton, NJ 08541; email at toefl@ets.org. Please request that your report be forwarded to the UW using the [institution code #4854](#). Score reports more than two years old from the test date are not valid. (See Graduate School website for instructions and exceptions.)(See [Graduate School Memo 15](#) for the University's policy.)
2. [University of Washington Statement of Financial Ability form](#). After an international applicant planning to study in F-1 immigration status has been admitted and pays the enrollment confirmation deposit, they will receive access to the UW I-20 request form in their [application](#) portal. The form is available online to individuals who have successfully submitted an application to the [Graduate School website](#).

Reasonable Accommodation for Disabilities

The UW and School of Social Work meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for accessibility and accommodations. Our application materials can be made available in alternative formats if needed.

The University of Washington affirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran in accordance with University policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations. The University of Washington is committed to providing access and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. To request disability accommodation in the application process, contact the [Disability Services Office](#) at 206.543.6450 (Voice), 206.543.6452 (TTY), 206.685.7264 (FAX), or dso@u.washington.edu.

Decision-making process

Faculty members on the PhD Program Committee make admissions decisions on the basis of the following: aptitude for social welfare research and scholarship, demonstrated commitment to issues of equity and justice, letters of reference, professional experience, match with potential faculty mentors, institutional resources available to support the applicant's research, and scholastic achievement.

Submission of PhD Application Materials

Due Date for applications is DECEMBER 1, 2024

Please note: Application materials must be uploaded by midnight (12 a.m. PST) on **DECEMBER 1, 2024**. **No applications will be accepted after the due date.**

All documents should be submitted online through the [UW Graduate School online portal](#). All files should be titled with your Last Name, First Name, Document Type (i.e., Transcript). All documents should have your Last Name, First Name and page numbers on each page.

Routine inquiries about application procedures and the program should be addressed to the PhD in Social Welfare Assistant Director (206.685.1680; sswphdpr@uw.edu). Questions related to research interests or availability of specific faculty should be directed to the Assistant Director.