



School of Social Work

Doctoral Student Handbook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LSU School of Social Work: History, Vision, Mission & Goals	4
PhD Program Philosophy	5
Administrative Structure and Governance of the School	5
Communication	5
Address Changes	6
Parking	6
Student ID	6
Textbooks	6
Security	6
Registration	7
Course Load Requirements	7
Dropping & Adding Courses	7
Fees and Financial Aid	7
Tuition Awards	7
Graduate Assistantships	7
Residence Food Services	8
Student Health Center	8
Library	8
Office of Disability Services	8
LSU Student Rights & Responsibilities	9
Social Work and Other Professional Expectations	10
Academic Integrity	10
Policies and procedures for review of academic performance	11
Examinations and Grading	14
Grade Requirements	15
Appeals	15
Student Evaluation of Teaching	15
Termination from Social Work PhD Program	15
Student Evaluation of Teaching	16
Termination from Social Work Program	16
PhD Program Philosophy and Description	17
Program Requirements, Credit Transfer, Time Limit for Completion	19
Academic Advising	20
Program of Study Overview	21
Program Curriculum	21
Timeline of Doctoral Degree Milestones and Activities	22
Specific Guidelines & Procedures for General Examination Process	24
Guidelines & Procedures for Dissertation Process	27
Committee Member Removals	29
Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education	30
Appendix: Dissertation Formats	31

This handbook is designed to provide direction and assistance to graduate students and faculty in the School of Social Work (SSW). This handbook gives PhD students a valuable roadmap through the School's activities, administration, educational programs, facilities, services, and student rights and responsibilities. Requirements and procedures specific to the PhD program are discussed in the handbook and additional information is available on the [School of Social Work website](#). This guide is intended as a supplement to the *LSU General Catalog - The Graduate School*, which is the authoritative source for academic regulation of the University. It is the responsibility of graduate students to be familiar with the contents of the *LSU General Catalog – The Graduate School*, as well as this handbook. Students are also responsible for being aware of and meeting the deadlines printed in the [Graduate School Calendars](#). This current handbook was updated in September of 2016 by the SSW Doctoral Program Director and Office of Student Services. All information in the handbook is subject to change.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

History

The Louisiana State University School of Social Work was founded in 1937 in the era of the New Deal programs, reflecting a growing national need for professional social workers in practice and administrative roles. Originally known as the Graduate School of Public Welfare Administration, the School has prepared many social workers in Louisiana and across the country for professional social work careers. The School is a charter member of the Council on Social Work Education and its master's program has maintained continuous accreditation with that body since its inception. Its parent institution, LSU, is the flagship of the system of higher education in Louisiana and one of the original land grant universities. As part of this inheritance, the School is dedicated to the promotion of the well-being of the state's citizens, and this dedication guides many of our activities as social work educators to this day. In 2012, as part of a larger university reorganization, the LSU SSW was incorporated into a new College of Human Sciences and Education (CHSE). At the same time, the Child and Family Studies (CFS) program and faculty was incorporated into the SSW. CFS faculty are fully integrated into the SSW and retain all rights and privileges except as limited, for example, by SW accrediting bodies.

Vision

To advance social justice, inclusion, and well-being for all.

Mission

The mission of the LSU School of Social Work is to advance social science and social wellbeing by engaging in applied and practice-informed research, as well as evidence-informed practice and teaching, with the goal of improving lives and working toward sustainable social justice.

Goals

1. **Student Success** | Empower students with the skills needed to become highly competent professionals, with a particular focus on the impact of our work on high-risk, under-resourced and diverse populations across the lifespan.
2. **Faculty Success** | Generate high quality, paradigm-shifting knowledge regarding current social problems and the evidence-informed interventions that address them.

3. **Social Justice** | Improve the wellbeing of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities through service.
4. **Success across the Life-span** | Promote lifelong learning for professionals to ensure that they are able to address current social problems with evidence-informed solutions.

For more information about the LSU School of Social Work, please visit the [Social Work website](#).

PhD Program Philosophy

We at the LSU School of Social Work believe that doctoral education in social work must involve first and foremost a passionate commitment to learning, and a specific commitment to the pursuit of new knowledge that can improve the lives of our client populations. The PhD Program at the LSU School of Social Work prepares the next generation of social work educators, researchers, administrators, and policy-makers to contribute to the creation of the knowledge base of our profession. We prepare students above all else to conduct empirical research targeted at the pressing needs of our client populations and service systems. Social work practitioners must have the highest quality up-to-date knowledge to strengthen the evidence base of their work, and it is the job of doctoral-trained social workers to provide this.

Administrative Structure and Governance of the School

The Director of the SSW is responsible for the overall operations of the school, while the faculty administers the BSW, MSW & PhD programs. The Director of the PhD Program works closely with the faculty and students to provide an advanced interdisciplinary degree that will equip graduates for roles in policy analysis, research, teaching, and the development of new knowledge for interventions and for addressing social problems and social welfare issues. The Director of Student Services works closely with students, faculty and the university at large to facilitate all aspects of student services and admissions while the Director of Field Education administers all aspects of field internships and supervision. Various faculty committees monitor such SSW activities such as curriculum design, field internship, research, and faculty recruitment and retention.

Students, alumni, faculty, and staff labor together as a professional community to produce the next generations of competent professional social workers by providing excellent education, scholarship, and MSW field learning. Students and alums exert potent influence on the direction and procedures of the School, where their representatives serve on School committees. Doctoral students are represented via standing committees of the SSW, as well through the SSW Alumni Association.

Communication

Email using LSU's myLSU is the primary method of communicating with students and all students are required to obtain a myLSU Email address. Log in information is Emailed to students upon acceptance to LSU by ITS. It is the responsibility of students to check their Email regularly. Email addresses are maintained for myLSU accounts only. Forwarding myLSU mail to another service provider mailbox is the responsibility of the student.

Phones in administrative and faculty offices can be used with permission and in emergencies. Mobile phone use is prohibited in classrooms unless otherwise permitted by the instructor. Students employed

by the SSW in any capacity (e.g., graduate assistant) must have current contact information, preferably a cell phone number, on file with the SSW office of Student Services.

Address Changes

Students whose physical address and/or telephone numbers change during the course of the year must update this information with the School of Social Work AND the University Registrar's Office. The School of Social Work change can be made by Emailing the Office of Student Services, who directs the change to other offices within the School of Social Work. The University Registrar's change can be made by visiting the office in Thomas Boyd Hall or by using a myLSU account to make changes on-line. If the student fails to notify the University Registrar's Office and the Office of Student Services, he or she will still be held accountable for the correspondence and will not be relieved of any responsibility from the contents of the correspondence.

Parking

Parking for students is available on the LSU campus. When students register, the Office of Parking & Transportation will mail a commuter parking tag. This tag should be visible at all times and it allows the student to park in any blue commuter lot. Special provisions are made for those students who have special physical or medical problems that prevent them from walking the 3-6 blocks from the parking areas to the classroom areas. Students are only permitted to park in assigned lots and designated areas; deviating from these areas will result in a parking ticket or having the car towed away. Students must satisfy all parking tickets (as well as all outstanding fines) in order to register for the subsequent semester, obtain a transcript, receive grades, or graduate. After 4:30p.m., students can use most campus parking spaces as long as the parking pass is properly displayed. Additional information about [parking](#).

Student Identification Card

Upon paying fees to the university, all new students are required to obtain a student identification card. The ID Office is located in the Student Union. Students must present this ID for a variety of services and functions including to check out library books, take advantage of student rates at the Union recreational areas, attend campus functions at a discount rate, and obtain student tickets to athletic events. Some area businesses also offer discounts to students who present their ID. The student ID card is also used as a debit card, which allows the student to make purchases around campus. Additional information about [LSU student ID cards](#).

Textbooks

Barnes & Noble at LSU is the official campus bookstore located at the corner of Highland and Raphael Semmes roads. It sells textbooks for each class offered, as well as auxiliary books for research. Several additional commercially-owned bookstores within the three- block area adjoining campus also carry books and school materials. Students should be prepared to purchase multiple textbooks for each class at the [LSU Bookstore](#).

Security

Student safety and security is a major priority of LSU; the campus makes every effort to keep the environment as safe and well-lit as possible. Personal items should be kept with a student at all times. Most buildings on campus are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The campus has its own police

force, and an escort service is available for students during the evening hours. Please view the training videos and safety tips at the [website for LSU Police](#).

Registration

Registration is done on-line through a myLSU account. Students schedule the prescribed courses as outlined in the appropriate program of study before each semester begins. New students receive registration information during the summer, while continuing students meet with their academic advisor (Director of PhD Program or Major Professor/Chair) to determine suitable courses. The Office of Student Services will facilitate registration of courses undertaken with a primary instructor for individual students, such as independent studies (SW 7905 or 7906), the research practicum (SW 7206), the teaching internship or dissertation hours (SW 9000).

Registration is defined as a student paying tuition and fees. Until a student's fees are processed by the Bursar's Office, a student is not registered and may be purged from classes. For more information and for access to current course offerings, see the [Schedule booklets](#). It is the student's responsibility to verify with the academic advisor that the correct courses are scheduled for the appropriate semester.

Course Load Requirements

The maximum course load for full-time doctoral students is 9 hours during the fall and spring semesters and 6 hours during the summer term. Requests for permission to schedule more than the maximum number of hours must be submitted in writing to the Director of the Doctoral Program.

Dropping and Adding Courses

The University sets specific deadlines for adding and dropping courses each semester and places these dates on numerous academic calendars. The SSW also provides a calendar with these dates to all students that can be found on the school's website. Students should pay particular attention to last day to add and drop dates as dropping courses may affect graduation. See the academic calendars at [Academic calendar](#).

Fees and Financial Aid

Details for current University fees, expenses, scholarships, and financial aid are found in the LSU General Catalog. Students who need financial aid, especially loans, should contact: Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, Pleasant Hall, LSU or [Financial Aid and Scholarships](#).

Tuition Awards

The Dean of the Graduate School may award up to 200 tuition exemptions to graduate students from underrepresented groups. These tuition awards provide for an exemption from either or both the resident and nonresident fee. Recipients are responsible for paying required University fees. Preference is given to students who identify as belonging to underrepresented cultural backgrounds. Students must be a new admission to a graduate program at LSU and be nominated by their departments. The Director of the PhD Program, in consultation with the PhD Committee, nominates qualified students who are newly admitted to the School of Social Work.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships are awarded to full-time students interested in attaining a career in academia and research. Graduate assistants (GAs) work 20 hours a week with an assigned faculty advisor; activities are designed to enhance research and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Graduate assistantships are awarded by the Director of the PhD Program depending upon availability of funds. Graduate assistants and their work are governed by [PS 21](#).

Residence Food Services

Residence Food Services offers several meal plans for on-campus and off-campus students. Several restaurants are housed in the Union and a campus cafeteria is located within the Pentagon cluster of dormitories, within a five-minute walk of the HPL Field House. Food trucks locate near classroom buildings, usually on the south side of campus. Additional information about [meal plans or restaurant locations](#).

Student Health Center

During the registration process, all full-time students are required to pay a health service fee. Part-time students may elect to pay this fee, thereby entitling them to use the Health Center services on the same basis as regular students. Dependents, however, are not entitled to use the service. In addition to the outpatient medical clinic, the Health Center offers a mental health clinic, pharmacy, medical laboratory, x-ray, and physical therapy. The Center charges reduced rates for some prescriptions, tests, x-rays, and physical therapy. Students with serious conditions are referred to outside physicians and hospitals at the student's expense. The LSU Student is located on campus and offers a variety of services. To find more detailed information visit the [Student Health Center website](#). Student hospitalization insurance is available at nominal rates at registration for those who wish to purchase it.

Library

Middleton Library is the main library within the LSU Libraries system and is a depository for extensive holdings and collections, state and U.S. government publications, newspapers from around the state, region, nation, and world, extensive microform holdings, and listening rooms with extensive collections of recordings. Middleton Library also houses a computer lab and a print center. Assistance is available through a centralized reference service, a central periodicals reading room, and a government documents reference desk. Students may check out books at the Middleton Library with an LSU ID card. The Interlibrary Loan program allows students to borrow research material not found in the Middleton Library. More information regarding library services, including computerized literature searches, may be found at [LSU Libraries](#).

Office of Disability Services

The University is committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with disabilities in their efforts to avail themselves of services and programs offered by the University. To this end, Louisiana State University will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with documented qualifying disabilities. If you have a disability and need accommodations, you must register with the [Office of Disability Services](#) in 115 Johnston Hall where required and recommended accommodations will be conveyed to instructors. Students will not be given accommodations without proper registration, documentation and consultation with the faculty member about the accommodation.

LSU Student Rights & Responsibilities

As citizens, LSU students possess the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the US Constitution, the state of Louisiana, and federal, state, and local laws. Among these are freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom to petition, due process rights, and equal protection under the law. There are, however, limitations on the time, place, and circumstances in which constitutionally guaranteed freedoms and rights may be exercised. U.S. courts have recognized that reasonable university regulation of student conduct is necessary, and have also established standards by which to judge those regulations.

The SSW shares a commitment to apply these student rights in class, in field internship settings, and in all transactions with School faculty, administration, and staff. In addition to the basic rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and interpreted by the courts, the University recognizes rights specific to students in the student-university relationship. Students have the right:

- to participate in activities of the University free from discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or veteran status;
- to the opportunity for a quality education;
- to know the University's regulations, rules, and policies by which they are governed;
- to participate in the formulation of University policies and to advocate changes in University regulations, rules, and policies;
- to a formal grade appeal procedure, in which the student may request consideration of an action by the University through one of its employees which the student believes adversely affected them; and
- to confidentiality of all student educational, disciplinary, medical and psychiatric records.

With student rights come student responsibilities. Federal court decisions affirm that, by voluntary entrance into the academic community, the student voluntarily assumes obligations and responsibilities reasonably imposed by the University. Beyond those responsibilities embodied in the law, students have the responsibility:

- to be good citizens of the LSU community, conducting themselves in a manner which helps create an environment conducive to the broad educational mission of LSU;
- to learn and comply with rules, policies, and requirements established by the University for the governance of students; and
- to respect the rights and freedoms of other members of the LSU community.

Students' responsibilities are detailed in the [Code of Student Conduct](#) (the "Code") and every student should review this document carefully. The Code of Student Conduct begins with a statement of Commitment to Community, which is the guiding principles for the LSU community. The continued success of LSU depends on the faithful commitment by each community member to these basic principles.

The University sets forth another student responsibility taken seriously and enforced by SSW faculty: **Students are responsible for attending all classes.** Additionally, “the counseling of students is a component of the educational process” and students enrolled in the SSW agree to submit themselves to advising, counseling, and professional discipline as part of the University's overall effort to accomplish its educational objectives. It is the prerogative of the University, through the faculty, administrators, and other employees, to decide on the correct application of general policy statements and procedures to students.

The Code also outlines students' rights under the University's judicial process. In addition to these rights, students retain all the basic rights and freedoms guaranteed to all citizens. Other particular rights and responsibilities of LSU students are included in various Policy Statements (PS) and Permanent Memoranda (PM) that are outlined below.

In Section 5 of the Code, the University specifies student accountability for a violation of the Code applies to conduct that occurs on the Campus, at LSU-sponsored activities, and/or when the student is representing LSU. The University retains the discretion to extend its jurisdiction over student conduct as a violation of the Code when the student behavior threatens the learning environment and would be a violation of the Code had the behavior occurred on campus.

Social Work and Other Professional Expectations

The SSW also sets forth certain student obligations. Social work students should exhibit professional behavior consistent with the social work values and ethics outlined by the NASW Code of Ethics and with the standards and principles established by professional regulatory authorities. Doctoral-level social work students represent the social work profession, so they must ensure that their behavior, dress, and demeanor are compatible with professional standards when acting in a professional capacity. Also, social work students are responsible for adhering to School policies surrounding course requirements, sequences of courses, and other curriculum issues.

The LSU SSW strives to prepare students for competent, ethical, and culturally appropriate social work practice. Because of the professional practice component, the SSW has different standards and expectations of students than do other non-professional programs in the University. Therefore, it should be understood by the student that both professional behavior and scholastic performance comprise academic standards.

Doctoral students who hold either the BSW or MSW degree are expected to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics, and the Louisiana Practice Act: Rules, Regulations and Procedures of the Practice Act. Doctoral students with other degrees and professional certifications are expected to abide by the corresponding codes of ethics and statutory practice standards.

Academic Integrity

At the heart of the intellectual process lies the principle of academic integrity. Students are expected to do their own work, and where the work of another is used, to give proper credit for the source. To falsify one's work or to steal the words or ideas of another is to corrupt the process by which knowledge is advanced and is a violation of the Code of Student

Conduct. According to LSU policy, academic misconduct is defined as any of the behaviors outlined in Section 10.1 of the Code and will not be tolerated. Likewise, behavioral misconduct is defined as any of the behaviors outlined in Section 10.2 of the Code and will not be tolerated.

When a faculty member has a reasonable basis for believing that a student has committed a violation of the Code, they are bound to submit evidence of the violation to the Office of Student Accountability and Advocacy (SAA). Faculty may take no disciplinary or punitive actions for Code violations outside this formal process. SAA investigates the violation and may determine the necessity for a hearing. Students found responsible by SAA for violation(s) of the Code will be subject to penalties determined by SAA. Sanctions levied against students who are not U.S. citizens can result in additional serious consequences that include loss of financial assistance and change in immigration status.

Information Sharing Policy

Information disclosed during student meetings or correspondence with faculty, faculty advisor, or administrative staff will not be kept confidential if the information raises concerns about the student's professional and/or academic performance. Faculty and administrative staff will share pertinent information with each other and the student for the professional purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about the concerns. To work together effectively, it is essential that relevant information be shared between involved parties. This information will be shared to protect clients as well as students, and to facilitate learning in all aspects of education.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

(Adapted from University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work MSSW Student Handbook, 2003)

Three levels of review can occur at the SSW in reviewing student's academic performance. A student subject to review under this policy may also be subject to the procedures and penalties outlined in the Code of Student Conduct and adjudication by SAA. The level of review depends upon the severity of the concern. Information disclosed during student meetings with faculty, administrative staff, or field instructors will not be kept confidential if the information raises concerns about professional and/or academic performance as per the Information Sharing policy described above. Faculty and professional staff will share pertinent information with each other for the purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about the concerns.

Performance that May Result in a Review and/or Possible Expulsion from the SSW:

Student reviews may occur under the following circumstances:

- Failure to meet or maintain academic requirements as stated under the Grade Requirements of this handbook and the *LSU General Catalog-The Graduate School*;
- Academic misconduct as specified in the Code;
- Behavior judged to be in violation of the NASW or other professional Codes of Ethics;
- Behavior judged to be in violation of standards or principles for professional

practice established by any state professional regulatory or licensing authority;

- A threat or attempt to harm oneself or someone else;
- Commission of crime that is contrary to professional practice;
- Consistent and documented pattern of unprofessional behavior;
- Violation of any university policy as outlined in the LSU Student Code of Conduct.

Levels of Review: Level 1

A Level 1 review involves a faculty member and a student. When a faculty member has concerns about a student meeting any of the academic criteria, whether related to professional behavior or scholastic performance, that faculty will:

- Discuss the concerns directly with the student and work with the student to resolve the difficulty.
- Apprise the Director of Student Services of the concerns in order to identify potential patterns and issues related to the student.
- Document the discussion and content of the meeting noting the plan of action and the timeframe for which the behavior will be resolved.
- If necessary, the Director of Student Services will solicit feedback from other instructors inquiring about similar behavior patterns. If feedback warrants further investigation the Director of Student Services notifies the student's faculty advisor and a Level 2 review will occur.

Levels of Review: Level 2

A Level 2 review involves the faculty member, the student, the student's faculty advisor, and the Director of Student Services. If the student's faculty advisor and instructor are one in the same, the Director of the Doctoral Program will appoint another faculty member to serve as advisor for this review process. This Level 2 review occurs when a student is not adhering to University, Graduate School, and/or School of Social Work standards, policies, and procedures or when concerns have not been resolved at Level 1.

The Director of Student Services, in consultation with the faculty advisor, will gather information from other faculty, staff or other appropriate parties as per the Information Sharing Agreement to determine the nature of the concern.

The faculty advisor and the Director of Student Services will develop a plan of action along with the student to address the concerns. This process is designed to assist students in addressing identified concerns that impact performance. Documentation of the discussion and content of the meeting noting the plan of action and the timeframe for which the behavior will be resolved will be maintained and updated, as needed, by the faculty advisor.

Levels of Review: Level 3

A Level 3 review is called when concerns are identified to be problematic patterns or

when issues are serious enough to require formal consultation with other faculty and the student.

A Level 3 review occurs under any one or more of the following circumstances:

- When concerns have not been resolved in prior reviews;
- When issues relate to a student not meeting the criteria for academic performance;
- When the student is being considered for expulsion/withdrawal from the PhD program;
- When a student licensed or otherwise credentialed by any state regulatory board or authority has any complaint, investigation, sanction or disciplinary actions against them. The student shall immediately notify the Office of Student Services prior to returning to any class. This will prompt a Level 3 Review to determine if the student will be allowed to continue in class, and if so, under what conditions;
- When a student is arrested or otherwise charged with a crime. The student shall immediately notify the Office of Student Services prior to returning to class. This will prompt a Level 3 review to determine whether the student will be allowed to continue in class, and if so, under what conditions.

When a Level 3 review is warranted, the Director of Student schedules the time, date and location of the review. The review panel consists of the student, faculty advisor, the faculty member, and 2 to 3 faculty members appointed by the Director of the Doctoral Program who have no direct knowledge of the identified situation being reviewed. The Director of the Doctoral Program will select a panel member to chair the review process. The student will be notified in writing by the Director of Student Services of the concerns and meeting date, with sufficient time to prepare and attend the review. All information about the identified concerns will be distributed to the panel members at the time of the review.

The purpose of this Level 3 review is to determine the nature of the problem and identify alternatives for remediation, if warranted. After the review, the panel will make recommendations regarding the student. Once recommendations are made, the panel Chair and the faculty advisor will consult with the Director of the Doctoral Program to discuss the problem situation and the panel's recommendations. Based on the review process, conference with the Director of the Doctoral Program, and an objective assessment of the information provided, the Director of Student Services will inform the student of the panel's decisions which can include one or more of the following:

1. Continue the student in the PhD program with no conditions.

In this situation, the concern has been addressed and no further action by the student or program is required.

2. Establish formal conditions for the student's continuance in the program.

Specific conditions must be met in order for the student to remain in the program. Action may include establishing new goals, plan of action, timeline to complete the goals; provide mentoring and support; referring the student to counseling services; allowing the student

to follow a reduced course load or delay entry to field internship; or requiring the student to withdraw from the program with the option to possibly reapply at a later date. The faculty advisor will monitor the student's progress. Failure to adhere to the conditions will be grounds for expulsion from the PhD program.

3. Consult with and/or Refer to the Office of Student Accountability and Advocacy (SAA)

In some instances, it may be necessary to consult and/or refer cases to SAA. If a referral is made to SAA, the student will be notified in writing about the nature of the concern and that the referral is taking place.

4. Expulsion of the Student from the PhD Program

In some situations, it may be recommended that the student no longer continue in the social work program. The student will be informed in writing of the decision. In any Level 3 review, there must be clear, concise documentation of the problem areas as well as verification that these concerns have been discussed with the student and attempted to be resolved, where appropriate. Students must be notified of the decision in writing 10 business days from the review. It is the responsibility of the Director of Student Services to communicate the decision to the student.

Student Appeal Procedures

The student has the right to appeal any decision that the student deems to be unfair or in any case where the student believes that policies have not been fairly adhered. Students have the right to use the appeal process without fear of coercion, harassment, intimidation or reprisal for make the appeal. This is a right the School will safeguard.

The decision of a Level 3 review may be appealed in writing to the Director of the School of Social Work within 14 business days of the decision. The appeal must specifically state the reason for reconsideration of the decision by the Level 3 review panel. If the student is not satisfied with the decision reached by the Director of the School of Social Work, the student can follow the general appeal procedure available to students outlined in [PS 48](#).

Non-Academic Appeals

Student-initiated grievances that are not academic in nature also are addressed in PS-48. Students have the right to use appeal procedures without fear or coercion, harassment, intimidation, or reprisal for making the appeal, a right which the School will safeguard.

Examinations and Grading

The faculty of the School adheres to the University's general policy on examinations and grading as stipulated in the [LSU General Catalog for the Graduate School](#), which students are urged to read carefully. Students should pay particular attention to the circumstances under which the incomplete (I) grade can be awarded and the responsibilities of the instructors and the student to have this grade removed. Failure to remove the "I" grade by the specified date will result in the "I" grade becoming a permanent "F".

Student grading is governed by [PS 44](#). At the beginning of each course, instructors publicize the nature and weighting of the components that they will factor into the final grade. Grading is based on assigned work and is evaluated equitably, with no special consideration given to individual students. All instructors are required to hold a final examination and to issue the final grade in a timely manner. Upon completion of any course, students may ask instructors to review and explain their examination grades and final grade. Final grades can be obtained by utilizing a student's myLSU account. Students should be aware that not all grades will be reported at the same time.

During the semester in which a doctoral student intends to graduate, he or she must successfully complete the final examination, which is the defense of the dissertation as outlined under Requirements for the Degree.

Grade Requirements

No more than six credit hours of grades of "C" will be counted toward the PhD degree. Grades of D or F will not count toward the PhD degree and must be repeated. Students who obtain grades of C or lower may be placed on probation or dropped by the Graduate School if the semester and/or cumulative GPA drop below a 3.0. For more information on [Grade Appeals in the LSU General Catalog](#).

Appeals

Formal appeal procedures are outlined in the LSU General Catalog. Students have the right to use appeal procedures without fear or coercion, harassment, intimidation, or reprisal for making the appeal, a right which the School will safeguard. A student who is dissatisfied with a grade should carefully read this material to be aware of deadlines and procedures. A brief overview of the procedure follows:

1. The student should meet with the faculty member to discuss the situation and attempt to arrive at a solution.
2. If the matter is not resolved between the student and faculty member AND the student still wishes to appeal further, the student may submit a written appeal to the Director of the School of Social Work.
3. If the student is not satisfied with the decision reached, the student may appeal to the Dean of the College. More information on grade appeal process can be found in the LSU General Catalog (see above link).

Student Evaluation of Teaching

At the end of each semester, students have the chance to evaluate their courses, which provides feedback to instructors and ultimately improves the quality of instruction in the SSW. Course evaluations are completed electronically through links provided by the University at designated times. Students' evaluations are anonymous.

Termination from Social Work Program

Students may be terminated from the social work program for academic reasons, which include inability to pass courses, not satisfactorily completing the exit requirements, including the General Examination and/or the Final Examination consisting of doctoral dissertation and dissertation defense, unethical behavior in the classroom, or the result of a Level 3 decision.

Reenrollment and Readmission

When a previously enrolled student does not enroll for any fall or spring semester, voluntarily or involuntarily, and subsequently wishes to reenroll, a written request for reenrollment must be made to the Director of the Doctoral Program. Requests for reenrollment will be reviewed by the Director of the Doctoral Program and the Doctoral Program Admissions Committee. Reenrollment decisions will be based on performance in the doctoral program, input from faculty who have interacted with the student while in the program, and the student's record of professional conduct, as described in the Doctoral Student Handbook. Reenrollment is not guaranteed to formerly enrolled students who apply for reenrollment. When a student has not enrolled for three or more consecutive semesters (summer term included), Graduate School policies governing readmission will. Prior performance, input from faculty, and student conduct may also be considered when deliberating readmission decisions.

Appeals of Admission Decisions: Applicants who have been denied admission to the Doctoral Program (including reenrollment and readmission) have the right to appeal. Appeals will be directed, first, to the Director of the Doctoral Program, who may request that the Doctoral Program Admissions Committee re-examine its decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing. If the student is not satisfied with the result of this review, the student may appeal the decision directly to the Director of the School of Social Work. If the student is not satisfied with the result of the SSW Director's review of the application, the student may appeal to the Dean of the College.

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

The faculty of the SSW aggressively opposes acts of discrimination against students based on physical or social characteristics. The faculty affirms its support for Louisiana State University's equal opportunity policy.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated in the SSW. Per [PS 73](#) sexual harassment includes:

- speech and/or conduct of a sexually discriminatory nature, which was neither welcomed nor encouraged, which would be so offensive to a reasonable person as to create an abusive working or learning environment and/or impair his/her performance on the job or in the classroom;
- a situation where unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature are made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment and submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual results in a tangible and adverse employment action; or
- unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or gender-based conduct in which the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an

individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Students should work cooperatively with the School's administration to ensure that students, staff and faculty in the school are protected from harassment. Students are urged to report cases of harassment to the Director or directly to the University's Office of Human Resource Management (Room 304, Thomas Boyd Hall, phone, 578-8200). No student is expected to make a complaint regarding sexual harassment to the person(s) engaged in the problematic conduct.

Likewise, per [PS 95](#) , sexual harassment of students by students will not be tolerated.

PhD Program Philosophy and Description

We at the LSU School of Social Work believe that doctoral education in social work must involve first and foremost a passionate commitment to learning, and a specific commitment to the pursuit of new knowledge that can improve the lives of our client populations. The PhD Program at the LSU School of Social Work prepares the next generation of social work educators, researchers, administrators, and policy-makers to contribute to the creation of the knowledge base of our profession. We prepare students above all else to conduct empirical research targeted at the pressing needs of our client populations and service systems. Social work practitioners must have the highest quality up-to-date knowledge to strengthen the evidence base of their work, and it is the job of doctoral-trained social workers to provide this. The major educational outcomes for our doctoral students are:

- To learn about the historical and contemporary contexts of social work research, focusing on the nature of research questions posed and the methods used to address these;
- To learn to critically analyze the quality and merits of social work research in a variety of substantive areas;
- To produce original research relevant to the field of social work, including the framing of research questions, synthesis of the existing relevant literature, the use of appropriate methods to investigate answers to research questions, and the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of data; and
- To translate learning to practice, especially through preparation for teaching beginning social work professionals.

The LSU School of Social Work doctoral program is the only PhD in Social Work program in Louisiana. It is an interdisciplinary degree in which students are expected to explore diverse areas and traditions of inquiry and use a variety of research methods, all the while keeping a sharp focus on the need for information to inform social work practice. It is important to note that ours is not an advanced clinical program. The course of study in the doctoral program is completely oriented toward mastering the skills needed to design and conduct empirical social work research.

The social work profession increasingly demands evidence-based knowledge and expertise

in research and evaluation. Recently, the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE), a consortium of social work PhD Program Directors, completed a national study that found that social work programs at virtually all levels in the US face a tremendous shortage of doctoral-trained academicians in the coming years to fill the ranks of the social work programs in our colleges and universities. Thus, there is a tremendous need for social work academicians who are properly trained, passionate about pursuing the answers to important questions affecting client populations, and eager to take on the challenges to improving social work practice and the well-being of our clients. Additional information about GADE can be found at [GADE website](#).

Social work faculty is well-equipped to effectively mentor doctoral student research. Major areas of research and scholarship expertise that current faculty mentors provide to doctoral students include:

- Child welfare/child maltreatment
- Children's attachments to caregivers
- Substance use & interventions
- Juvenile justice
- School social work & truancy
- Welfare/family support-related policies
- The personal and social circumstances of welfare-receiving families
- Social capital and poverty
- Vulnerable families
- High-risk youth
- Gay and lesbian youth
- Gerontology
- Intimate partner violence
- Behavioral health & interventions
- Immigrants and immigration policies
- International and comparative social welfare and social development

Doctoral studies in social work at LSU are characterized by three major phases of work:

- coursework (completion of a minimum of 39 credit hours of coursework prior to General Exam);
- the General Examination (an intense period of self-guided study and examination directed by a faculty advisory committee); and
- the Dissertation (the student's original research, guided by a primary mentor and 2 other faculty committee members).

It is expected that the period of study for the doctoral degree in social work will be 3 to 5 years, but not exceeding 7 years.

The PhD in Social Work program is small, usually admitting 3-5 students per year. This means that all students work very closely with faculty mentors, oftentimes directly with them on their ongoing research. The doctoral program represents a diverse student body that includes students from several foreign countries.

Program Requirements, Credit Transfer, Time Limit for Completion

Policies of the Graduate School and the LSU Graduate Faculty govern all graduate programs at LSU, and it is the responsibility of the student to know and follow all policies and procedures as prescribed. These may be found in the Graduate School section of the [Graduate School Catalog](#) and on the [Graduate School website](#).

Students are expected to successfully complete a minimum of **54** semester credit hours of study, including a minimum of 9 dissertation credit hours, all of which must be completed within 7 years of being classified as a doctoral student:

- Maintain an overall grade-point average of 3.0, with no grade less than “C” in any course offered for the degree;
- Demonstrate mastery of a broad major field (e.g., social work, social welfare) as evidenced by passing the General Examination;
- Satisfactorily complete the Exit requirements as evidenced by passing a Final Examination consisting of the doctoral dissertation and the dissertation defense.

Course credit may be transferred and the specific number and types of courses are determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the Director of the Doctoral Program, who solicits input and advice from the Doctoral Program Admissions Committee and Director of Student Services. In general, courses may be considered for LSU SSW doctoral credit if:

- The course(s) were taken as part of another PhD program and are comparable to LSU SSW doctoral-level courses;
- The course(s) were taken within the 5 years prior to application to the LSU PhD program;
- Grades of A or B were earned in the course(s); and
- Other relevant criteria are met, as set forth in the *LSU General Catalog-The Graduate School*

The LSU Graduate School maintains a policy that the doctoral degree must be completed within 7 years. Extensions beyond year 7 are not automatic and require a formal meeting of the student’s committee to:

- Address the validity of the petition/written request by the student;
- Endorse the quality of the student’s preparation/research;
- Establish a reasonable expectation for completion given student’s circumstances. Outcomes from this meeting will be formally documented by the student’s Major Professor/Chair and then authorized by the Directors of the Doctoral Program, Student Services, and the School of Social Work.

The written petitions will be submitted to the LSU Graduate School for a final decision. More than a single, one-year extension should only be granted for truly exceptional cases.

Academic Advising

Social work students meet with their academic advisor on a regular basis to assist with academic, professional, and career matters. Students ultimately are responsible for keeping abreast of changes, knowing degree requirements, enrolling in the appropriate courses in a timely manner and seeking advice to questions regarding any aspect of their academic program. In the School of Social Work, the advisement function is conceptualized and operationalized in two roles: Academic Advisor and Director of Student Services.

The Director of the PhD Program typically serves as the faculty advisor to all students during the coursework phase of the program. With input from the Director of the Doctoral Program, the student selects a Major Professor/Chair no later than the penultimate fall or spring semester of coursework. This faculty mentor ideally remains constant until the student graduates. Students are encouraged to meet with their Major Professors/Chairs as often as necessary to ensure continuity in the program or to resolve any problems. If necessary, Major Professors/Chairs will seek assistance from appropriate authorities on behalf of students.

Academic advisors are expected to list office hours on or near the door of their offices. Voicemail and Email enable students to contact advisors to ask questions and schedule appointments as needed.

Doctoral students are required to meet with the academic advisor (viz., Director of the Doctoral Program or Major Professor/Chair) at least once per semester during the school year to discuss courses and update the planned program of study. Students should not register for classes without having met with their academic advisor. Advisement and course scheduling is monitored by the Director of the Doctoral Program and Office of Student Services.

Knowledgeable about the University and Graduate curriculum policies, the Director of Student Services assists students in scheduling courses in the correct sequence, provides basic information about various options, liaises between the Graduate School and School, monitors reports on students who may be experiencing difficulty, alerts faculty advisors of any concerns, and keeps students' records current. The Director of Student Services is responsible for lifting flags in the registration system once advising forms are completed by the student and signed by the academic advisor. Students should consult with the Director of the Doctoral Program or Major Professor/Chair before dropping a course or adding a course outside of the university and/or in another campus department.

Program of Study: Overview

The PhD in social work is aimed at providing an advanced interdisciplinary degree that will equip graduates for important roles in policy analysis and development, research, teaching and the development of new intervention technologies. All students must complete a minimum of **54** hours of graduate level course credit beyond their master's degree. The doctoral program of study is composed of two major phases: coursework and dissertation research.

The coursework phase is guided by a formal academic course plan, or program of study, developed in consultation with the Director of the Doctoral Program, the student's Major Professor, and doctoral advisory committee. The program of study lists all curricular requirements for the degree, including courses accepted by the committee from other universities or programs. The program of study should be filed with the Graduate School early in the student's doctoral program and ideally by the end of the second semester of study. In some respects, the program of study describes expected coursework to be completed and when changes inevitably arise, is easily amended via memo to the Graduate School. However, the program of study becomes more fixed as the student completes their coursework and is verified as complete by the Graduate School before the student is permitted to complete the General Examination. The student's departmental-level academic course plan is subject to Graduate School policy and departmental requirements.

The advisory committee, which should include at least one representative from the minor field (if appropriate), is not necessarily identical to the student's committee for the general defense. The suggested general defense committee will be approved when the request for the general defense is submitted to the Graduate School.

Although students often work with one or more mentors, the Director of the Doctoral program serves as the primary academic advisor for all students during the coursework phase of the program. Toward the end of the coursework phase, students work more closely with a faculty committee that is chaired by a Major Professor, who then serves as the primary academic advisor. Upon completion of the coursework phase, students must pass the General Examination; however, many students begin preliminary work on their dissertation research projects during the last year of coursework or while preparing for the General Examination.

Students **without** the MSW Degree: Students entering the PhD program without the MSW degree will be required to complete a minimum number of specific MSW credit hours, as stipulated in the recommended program of study for students without the MSW degree, during the coursework phase of the doctoral program and prior to submitting the "Request for Doctoral General Examination and Doctoral Degree Audit Form" that is required by the Graduate School.

Part- and Full-Time Enrollment: There is no residency requirement stipulated by the LSU Graduate School; thus, students may pursue either a part-time or full-time program of study. Students who work full time outside of school must remain enrolled in the part-time program. If work circumstances change such that full-time enrollment is feasible, students may switch from part-time to full-time enrollment if approved by their academic advisor. Students who want to switch from the full-time program of study to the part-time program may also do so if approved by their academic advisor. However, it should be noted that full-time students who receive funding and/or tuition exemption may become ineligible for said funding/exemption when the student changes from full- to part-time enrollment.

Program Curriculum

The doctoral program curriculum in social work is composed of three areas (e.g., described in detail below, with a minimum of 54 total hours of coursework for completion.

1. Foundation Courses in the School of Social Work (15 Credit Hours)

SW 7200 Integrative Colloquium in Social Work I: Broad-ranging analysis and discussion of problems and issues in the social work profession.

SW 7201 Integrative Colloquium in Social Work II: Broad-ranging analysis and discussion of problems and issues in the social work profession.

SW 7202 Issues and Research Problems in Social Policy: Issues and problems in social welfare policy; research focus on policy formulation.

SW 7204 Issues and Research Problems in Social Work Intervention: Social work intervention with individuals, families, groups, and communities; formulation and development of problem-solving research agendas.

SW 7207 Integrative Seminar: Taught as an Integrative Seminar to develop research questions and hypotheses, and initial drafts of the dissertation proposal, including introduction, literature review, and methodology sections. (If fewer than 5 eligible students, they will register for **SW 7905/6** Independent Reading and Research in Social Work.)

2. Research Methods and Statistics & Interdisciplinary and Elective Courses

(Minimum of 12 Total Credit Hours)

Research Methods & Statistics

Stats 1: Taken outside of department (e.g., POLI 7962, ELRC 7006)

Stats 2: Taken outside of department (e.g., POLI 7963, ELRC7016)

Research Cognate (e.g., ELRC 7280, ELRC 7243, ELRC 7220): One additional research course taken outside of department, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor, directly related to dissertation research needs.

SW 7206 Research Practicum: Hands-on supervised research experience; demonstration of collaborative and/or independent research.

Interdisciplinary and Elective Courses

Students, in consultation with an advisor, will choose additional 12 hours of required course work, augmented for PhD credit as needed, incorporating one or more of the following academic disciplines: Anthropology, Economics, Education (ELRC), Finance, History, Human Ecology, Management, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Social Work.

Students with no MSW are required to take SW 7004 Human Diversity and Oppression, which will count as one of the required elective courses.

3. Dissertation (9-15 Credit Hours)

SW 9000 Dissertation

TIMELINE OF DOCTORAL DEGREE MILESTONES AND ACTIVITIES

Program of Study Plan

Early in the coursework phase, all doctoral students should develop a Program of Study plan in consultation with the Director of the Doctoral Program who serves as the primary academic advisor. The Director of the Doctoral Program may require students to complete Degree Audit forms or other forms that document coursework, degree milestones, and scholarly activities. Changes in coursework or changes to the original program of study plan must be approved by the Director of the Doctoral Program. All coursework requirements must be met before students submit a General Examination proposal to their Major Professor/Chair.

Selection of Major Professor/Chair

During the coursework phase of the program, each student should regularly confer with faculty to aid in the selection of a Major Professor/Chair, the primary academic advisor who chairs the faculty advisory committee that oversees the General Examination, as well as the dissertation research and defense. Students should select a Major Professor/Chair no later than the penultimate fall or spring semester of coursework.

General Examination

Due to the comprehensiveness and depth of the General Examination, students should set aside a concentrated study period, usually several months, to prepare for the written and oral components. The examination proposal, described in greater detail below, should facilitate decision making about the timing of the General Examination, which ultimately is determined by all parties: the Major Professor/Chair, other committee members, and the student. The "Request for Doctoral General Examination and Doctoral Degree Audit Form" must be submitted to the Graduate School at least 3 weeks prior to the date of the General Examination. The General Examination date is the date of the oral exam, not the written portion. The oral exam must be scheduled on a day that the committee agrees to meet and on a day that the University is open. The General Examination may be completed during the summer. All doctoral degree forms can be obtained from the [Graduate School website](#).

Dissertation Proposal Review

The dissertation proposal review is an internal process that does not require approval from the Graduate School. However, the student must submit the written dissertation research proposal to the faculty advisory committee at least 2 weeks prior to the proposal review date. Guidelines and procedures for the Dissertation Proposal Review and Dissertation Defense processes are detailed in a subsequent section below. The Graduate School refers to the dissertation defense as the "Doctoral Final Examination."

Timing between General Examination and Final Examination (Dissertation Defense)

Permission to hold the Final Examination will be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School after a number of conditions have been satisfied:

- Doctoral candidates must maintain continuous registration (i.e., SW 9000) for a minimum of 3 semester credit hours each regular semester (excluding summers) from the completion of the General Examination to the end of the semester in which an approved dissertation is

submitted to the Graduate School;

- The “Request for Doctoral Final Examination” form must be submitted to the Graduate school 3 weeks prior to the date of the examination AND by the current semester deadline for graduates;
- The student’s faculty committee, including the Dean’s Representative, must have copies of the dissertation document at least 2 weeks prior to the date of the scheduled dissertation defense (Final Examination); and
- A minimum of 3 calendar months must separate the General Examination and dissertation defense (Final Examination). The time between the General and Final Examinations allows students to address and accommodate substantive revisions and suggestions made by the advisory committee. It is the faculty committee’s responsibility to maintain the academic integrity of the process and endorse the quality of the completed work.

Final Examination (Dissertation Defense)

The “Request for Doctoral Final Examination” form must be submitted to the Graduate school 3 weeks prior to the date of the examination AND by the current semester deadline for graduates. As noted above the Graduate School refers to the dissertation defense as the Final Examination.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR GENERAL EXAMINATION PROCESS

Selecting the General Examination Committee

As the student progresses through the program, they will begin to develop or refine specific substantive and research interests and to identify faculty members who share these interests and who might serve on a General Examination Committee. As noted above, the student should choose a Major Professor, who chairs the General Examination committee, no later than the final fall or spring semester of coursework. The Major Professor becomes the student’s primary academic advisor, and henceforth will authorize, review, and sign all doctoral degree forms. Together, the student and Major Professor will then choose the rest of the committee membership to recommend to the Graduate School. As per Graduate School policy, the following regulations apply:

- Doctoral committees must have a minimum of 3 committee members plus the Dean’s Representative;
- All three committee members must be members of the graduate faculty;
- The Major Professor, who acts as chair or co-chair, must be from the major department. If either an adjunct or a non-tenure track faculty member is the Major Professor, a full-time tenured or tenure/track graduate faculty member must co-chair the committee;
- At least one-half of the graduate faculty on doctoral committees must be full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty at LSU;
- A minimum of 2 of those faculty members must be from the student’s major department and at least one of whom must be a full member of the LSU graduate faculty;

- The remaining members may be from the major department or may be from outside the department if pertinent to the student's area of concentration, with the proviso that at least one of the remaining members must be a full member of the graduate faculty;
- Any declared outside minors require representation, either among the first 3 members of the committee or by additional appointments to the committee.

The Dean of the Graduate School appoints a member or members of the graduate faculty to serve on doctoral General and Final Examination Committees (Dean's Representative).

If the student wishes to have a committee member from another university, that person must be approved by the Director of the Doctoral Program and the Dean of Graduate School, and will serve in addition to the LSU graduate faculty members.

Please refer to the [Graduate School listing of eligible faculty](#).

The Graduate School and the SSW believe it is in the best interests of students that those with high probability of continuing successfully toward a doctoral degree be identified as soon as possible. Therefore, doctoral students are expected to complete their coursework and pass the general examination within three calendar years (36 months)—or a period deemed equivalent for part-time students—of their classification as fulltime doctoral students.

Content of the General Examination

As the student moves through the doctoral program, he or she will develop a specialization or area of focus within social work. In the content of the General Examination, the student will be expected to demonstrate a broad and integrated knowledge of policy, research, theory, and practice; and to show an understanding of how these apply to the substantive area of focus. The student and the Major Professor/Chair of the faculty advisory committee will decide upon the structure and scope of each content area to be covered in the exam, which must be comprehensive enough to demonstrate expert competence over broad segments of social work and a high degree of familiarity with the content of and current progress in the area of focus (or declared minor, if appropriate). If the student has declared an outside minor, the minor department has the right to decide the format and structure of its part of the examination.

In consultation with the Major Professor/Chair and the other members of the faculty advisory committee, the student will prepare approximately 4-6 broad learning objectives and a comprehensive bibliography in each content area. The student ideally will develop a first draft of the examination proposal while enrolled in SW 7207, Integrative Seminar, during the last semester of coursework. Bibliographies should go well beyond prior classroom reading, thereby prompting students to deepen their understanding of each area and to expand knowledge about the area of focus. Committee members will set questions

that are anchored in students' learning objectives and that can be answered using the sources listed in the bibliography.

To facilitate the process of guiding the student's reading and setting questions, the student will submit to the Major Professor/Chair and other committee members an examination proposal that contains learning objectives and bibliographies relevant to: substantive area of focus; intervention area pertaining to application to practice and policy; theory, and research methodology. The student should regularly confer with committee members throughout this process, as well as individually meet with committee members (excluding the Dean's Representative) at least three weeks prior to the scheduled written examination date. The purpose of meeting is to confirm that the student's examination proposal is sufficiently comprehensive to proceed with testing.

Structure of the General Examination

Students may choose, in consultation with the Major Professor/Chair, one of two options for the written General Examination: take home or in-house. Both options require an oral defense of the exam. The Major Professor is responsible for coordinating the logistics of both exam options.

For the written take-home exam, the student will receive the exam questions from the Major Professor/Chair at a predetermined time. The student will then have 72 hours to complete and submit the exam to the committee members. For the in-house exam, the student will write the exam on campus, over the course of 3-4 days, but within a 1-week period of time. The Major Professor/Chair will locate suitable space for test taking, as well as provide a computer that does not have Internet access. The amount of time provided to write each question on each day will be determined by the Major Professor/Chair and other committee members, in consultation with the student. Exam questions will be provided to the student at the start of each designated time period. If approved by the Major Professor/Chair and other committee members, students may use annotated bibliographies. Students may bring only snacks and keys into the exam room. Students must make arrangements to store all other personal items while taking the exam.

The student will proceed to the oral defense of the General Examination following the approval of the Major Professor/Chair and other committee members. The oral defense will be held no later than 2 weeks following the written exam. This oral exam serves two functions: The first is a supplementary function, permitting the student to enrich and enlarge upon material in the written exam. The second is an integrative function, providing the student with the opportunity to apply knowledge about practice, policy, research methodology, and theory to issues within the substantive area of focus.

Grading of General Examination

(Approved by the Doctoral Committee, 2/18/99; Updated 8/12/03; Updated Spring 2006)

In order for students to proceed to the oral defense of the General Examination, the advisory committee first determines that the student has passed the written portion of the

examination. A student deemed to have failed the written examination does not proceed to the oral defense of the examination, and the first failure of the examination is reported to the Graduate School as such. In order for students to pass the General Examination, there may be no more than one dissenting vote. The written exam can be retaken once. In retaking the written exam, the student will rewrite only those portions of the exam that have been failed.

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR DISSERTATION PROCESS

The dissertation is a work of original scholarship that contributes in a meaningful way to the expansion of knowledge in social work. It is the final written document of a research study planned and conducted by the student with the advice and guidance of the major professor and other members of the dissertation committee. It is the final requirement for receiving the PhD and the culmination of the student's academic work in the doctoral program.

The dissertation process includes: confirming/selecting the Major Professor/Chair and faculty committee; identifying one or more specific areas of research interest; preparing and defending a dissertation proposal; completing the research; writing the dissertation, and; defending the dissertation. As noted above, the defense is referred to by the Graduate School as the Final Examination, which can be taken no earlier than three calendar months subsequent to the date of successfully completing the General Examination. Students may choose between two dissertation formats, the traditional 5-chapter format or the 3-paper format, each described in detail below.

Selecting a Major Professor/Chair and Faculty Advisory Committee

Students typically proceed from the General Examination through the Final Examination with the same Major Professor/Chair and faculty advisory committee. Thus, the choice of a Major Professor/Chair is an extremely important one. As Chair of the Examination and Dissertation Committees, this faculty member will be the student's primary mentor and guide, and will play a crucial role in managing the defense process for the General Examination and dissertation research. The student should have one or more specific research topics and/or methodological approaches in mind before approaching a potential Major Professor/Chair. This individual typically serves as the Chair of the student's General and Final Examination Committees. The student should identify a faculty member who shares the student's research interests and with whom the student is comfortable as an advisor and mentor.

If it is necessary to modify the composition of the doctoral dissertation committee after successfully completing the General Examination, the Graduate School regulations for the selection of the general exam committee (above) apply.

The Dissertation Proposal

The student and Major Professor/Chair may request an initial meeting of the committee and the student to discuss the student's proposal ideas and the preparation of the Dissertation Proposal.

The student will develop the dissertation proposal with the guidance of the Major Professor/Chair and in consultation with the other committee members. The proposal serves both as the research design for the study and as a contract between the student and the committee. The proposal formats for each of the two dissertation formats are described below. The proposal should also include an application to the Institutional Review Board (if applicable) and a statement of plans for dissemination of the dissertation.

Dissertation Proposal Review

The Graduate School does not require an official defense of the doctoral dissertation proposal. However, the SSW, like a number of other departments at LSU, has chosen to have a formal proposal review. One purpose of the review is to inform all members of the committee of the direction and substance of the proposed research and to seek their advice and approval. The review also clarifies areas which need further development.

In consultation with the members of the faculty advisory committee, the Major Professor/Chair and the student will set a date for the formal review of the dissertation proposal. The proposal shall be submitted to committee members at least two weeks before the defense.

During the defense, the student will describe the dissertation topic and the rationale for choosing that topic. Committee members will ask the student questions about the proposed dissertation and provide feedback and suggestions for carrying out the study. The review has both evaluative and consultative elements. The proposal must be approved by all members of the committee. It must be signed by all members and placed in the student's file. Once this occurs, the proposal constitutes a contract between the student and the committee members. The student is expected to carry out the research plan as stated, and the faculty is expected to give appropriate guidance. If changes need to be made as the research progresses, these can be approved by the Major Professor/ Chair and other faculty advisory committee members as amendments to the proposal.

Electronic Dissertation Requirements

The LSU Graduate School provides guidelines for correctly preparing the dissertation document for final submission on the worldwide web. LSU is a member of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, an international organization dedicated to promoting the adoption, creation, use, dissemination, and preservation of electronic theses and dissertations.

The Graduate School has developed guidelines that provide uniform standards for meeting LSU's document requirements, while allowing for differences in disciplinary practices. All dissertation documents must be consistent with these guidelines. [Learn more information about the standards for electronic dissertations.](#)

The SSW supports dissertations written either in the traditional 5-chapter format or the 3-paper dissertation option. Details on these options may be found in the Appendix.

Final Examination (Dissertation Defense)

In consultation with dissertation committee members, the Major Professor/Chair and the student set the date for the dissertation defense (Final Examination). Committee members, including the Graduate School Dean's Representative, must receive a copy of the dissertation at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense date.

The oral defense of the dissertation is the faculty advisory committee's review and evaluation of the dissertation document and of the student's explanation of the study. The student and Major Professor/Chair should maintain frequent and open communications with the committee throughout the dissertation process. The Major Professor/Chair may request that the committee members inform him or her if, after reviewing the written document, there is any reason why the defense should not proceed as scheduled.

At the defense, the student will present a summary of the dissertation, including a statement of the problem, major research questions, theoretical base, methodology, results and conclusions. Committee members will then raise questions or ask for clarification. At the conclusion of the defense, committee members will vote on whether the student has passed or failed. They may also discuss any revisions which they want the student to make.

Grading of the Final Examination

In order for the student to pass the Final Examination, there can be no more than one dissenting vote. If the student is asked to make revisions, the committee can choose whether these need to be approved by the entire committee or only by the Major Professor/Chair. The student then makes any necessary revisions and seeks final committee approval.

Timely Completion of the Degree after the Final Defense

Graduation may not be postponed for reasons having to do with funding availability, continuation of research projects, or other matters tangential to the awarding of the degree. The Graduate School requires that all final examination reports and the approval of all document corrections must be approved no later than the regular semester following the final defense of the dissertation. A final examination/dissertation defense may be voided by the Dean of the Graduate School for failure to have an approved document submitted in a timely manner.

COMMITTEE MEMBER REMOVAL**Student-Initiated Removal of a Committee Member**

When a student requests that a committee member, including the Major Professor/Chair, be removed from the General Examination or Final Examination (Dissertation) committee, and that committee member does not voluntarily resign from the committee, the Major Professor/Chair will call a meeting of the committee at which time the issues involved in the

case will be discussed. The committee then may make a recommendation as to whether the committee member in question should resign from the committee. If the issue is not resolved, it may be brought by either the student or the committee member in question to the Director of the Doctoral Program and Doctoral Program Committee for a review, and, subsequently, if the issue remains unresolved, to the Director of the School of Social Work for a final decision. A student-initiated change of the Major Professor/Chair late in the student's course of study is regarded as very unusual and will be considered only in extraordinary circumstances. Examples may include cases where there is a dual relationship, major conflict of interest, or where the Major Professor/Chair is clearly not providing, or is unable to provide, adequate guidance to the student.

Committee Member-Initiated (Self-) Removal from a Student Committee

When a doctoral committee member wishes to remove him- or herself from a student's General or Final Examination committee, the committee member should write a memo to the student explaining why this course of action has been taken. The memo should be copied to the Major Professor/Chair, Director of the Doctoral program, and Director of the School of Social Work. The student and Major Professor/Chair may then select a faculty member to replace the outgoing committee member. In the event that the Chair removes themselves, the student, in consultation with the Director of the Doctoral Program, will select a replacement. It is not the responsibility of the Director of the School of Social Work to replace committee members who have removed themselves.

GROUP FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION (GADE)

The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work is an organization made up of over 80 social work doctoral program directors worldwide who represent their member Universities. Founded in the late 1970s, GADE primary purpose is to promote excellence in doctoral education in social work, especially through networking, information sharing and advocacy. Members:

- focus on sharing experiences to support innovation and excellence in teaching and learning and the advancement of the quality of doctoral research;
- support the success and professional development of doctoral students in all their diversity;
- promote recognition of doctoral students' achievements and contributions;
- commit to identifying and sharing potential funding sources or other resources that support doctoral education;
- provide guidance and support to new and developing doctoral programs here and abroad;
- disseminate "Guidelines for Quality in PhD Programs;" and
- represent and promote the interests and concerns of social work/social welfare doctoral programs in the larger profession.

LSU School of Social Work PhD Program is a member of GADE. For additional information regarding GADE activities, programs, and opportunities, please visit the [GADE website](#).

APPENDIX

Dissertation Formats

Five-Chapter Format

The following is a suggested outline for the dissertation document:

Front Matter

- Title/author/date
- Acknowledgments
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures
- List of Appendices

Chapter 1

Introduction and Conceptual Framework

- An introductory statement that outlines the purpose of the study
- Statement of the problem(s) to be addressed
- Significance/importance of the study
- Brief note of literature relevant to major variables of the study
- Primary research questions and/or hypotheses posed with rationale
- Supplemental research questions and/or hypotheses (if any) posed with rationale
- General conceptual or theoretical focus/framework of the study
- Definitions of key terms/study variables (conceptual and operational definitions)
- Assumptions/limitations of the study

Chapter 2

Literature Review

- Literature review pertinent to scope of the study
- Literature review pertinent to study variables

Chapter 3 Methodology

- Basic research design
- Independent and dependent variables
- Study measures/instrumentation
- Sample and sampling procedure
- Data collection procedures
- Qualitative and/or quantitative data analysis methods used

Chapter 4 Results

- Major results/findings for study hypotheses and/or research questions
- Major results/findings for supplemental hypotheses and/or research questions

(if any)

Chapter 5

Conclusion, Discussion, and Implications

- Major findings and conclusions
- Discussion
- Implications of the findings for:
 1. Theory
 2. Research
 3. Social work practice/social welfare policy
 4. Education

This outline can be modified as determined by the Major Professor/Chair, other committee members, and student, especially for dissertations that are policy analyses and historical studies.

Three-Paper PhD Dissertation Option

Format

PhD students may opt to write their dissertations in a format consisting of 3 publishable papers plus abstract, introductory chapter, and concluding chapter. The articles should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme or themes that are expressed clearly in the introduction to the dissertation. The structure and content of the introduction and concluding chapter will be essentially the same as in the traditional 5- chapter dissertation format. The concluding chapter will also specifically present and discuss linkages (i.e., similarities and differences, themes or patterns) between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, striving as much as possible to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work.

The 3 middle chapters representing the 3 publishable papers will include one systematic review of existing research on the substantive topic or an article based on a theoretical or policy approach to the substantive topic. The other two articles should be empirical research based on data analyzed by the student as part of the dissertation process.

Proposal

The dissertation proposal for the 3-paper format will consist of the introductory chapter, detailed outlines for the 3 planned papers, and a complete methods section for at least one of the planned empirical papers.

Authorship

Students must be sole or first author on all articles. As first authors, students are responsible for development and articulation of a concept or idea for research, development of a proposal to pursue this idea, development of a research design, conducting research and analysis, writing major portions of a manuscript, designing an intervention or assessment (if relevant), and interpreting results. One article may be co-authored with the committee chair and/or committee members, the other articles must be sole-authored by the student. Any authorship in addition to the student is determined in consultation between the committee and the student and may be based on the nature of the data collected, e.g., in collaboration with a community organization where authorship should be shared with a community partner or with a faculty member who collected the data being used. However, in

all cases, the student must be responsible for writing at least 80% of any co-authored manuscript and must be the sole author of the methods and results sections and any tables summarizing data presented in those sections. Authorship must be negotiated prior to development of a manuscript and agreed upon in writing by all contributors as part of the completed dissertation proposal. Any subsequent changes in co-authorship must be approved by all members of the student's dissertation committee in writing.

To avoid conflicts of interest, any co-authors who are members of the student's dissertation committee must recuse themselves from judging articles carrying their name. In these cases, additional faculty members chosen by the PhD Program Director will, prior to the defense and in concert with those committee members who are not co-authors, determine the suitability of the article(s) in question.

Journal Submission

Journals must be approved by the dissertation committee. The committee will help select journals that will challenge the student and offer a reasonable chance of publication success.

Articles must be ready for submission prior to the dissertation defense and should be submitted as soon as possible following the defense, once any changes suggested by the committee at the defense are made. No articles written, accepted for publication, or published prior to the dissertation proposal should be included. All three should be written after the proposal defense.