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School of Social Work
MSW Admissions Policy 2015

I. Criteria for Admission, Fall 2015

Admission to the Master’s program at The University of Iowa School of Social Work is granted on a selective basis as determined by the merit of the total application. An applicant is expected to meet the following requirements:

A. Academic Background
   1. A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, (or an equivalent degree from another country as determined by the Office of Graduate Admissions), with a distribution of courses reflecting a liberal arts perspective, including courses in the humanities, as well as in the social, behavioral, and biological sciences.
   2. Competency with word processing and spreadsheet application on personal computers is expected.

B. Academic Potential
   A minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale of undergraduate study, (or foreign equivalent as determined by the Office of Admissions), or on 12 semester hours of graduate course work is required. Completion of the GRE exam is not required.

C. Proficiency in English
   Applicants from other countries whose first language is not English must have a score of 600 (written), 250 (computer-based test), and 100 (internet based test) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Automatic waivers of the TOEFL requirement are granted for persons who have completed a bachelor’s degree (or higher) at an accredited university in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada (excluding French Quebec), Africa (English speaking), Australia, or New Zealand. For further information: http://www.ets.org/toefl/.

D. Appropriateness for Professional Social Work Education
   Applicants must provide evidence of a combination of personal qualities and values that are considered essential for the professional practice of social work: good intellectual capacity and analytical skills combined with an ability to work constructively with others, good communication skills, judgment, adaptability, sense of responsibility, resourcefulness, caring and compassionate qualities, and a personal commitment to social justice, empowering individuals, and serving vulnerable and under-represented groups. Employment or practice experience in social work related areas is highly valued. Applicants' willingness and interest in addressing social justice issues that affect human beings as a consequence of oppression, poverty, marginalization and alienation because of the intersection of multiple factors, including those identified by CSWE: class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, sex, sexual orientation, and religious, non-religious or spiritual beliefs are fundamental to a successful experience in the School. These qualities are to be evidenced in the following completed application materials:
   - The University’s Graduate College Application, apply and pay online.
   - A School of Social Work Application Form, submitted online.
   - Official Transcripts from all colleges attended, other than University of Iowa.
• Applicant’s Statement of Purpose and essays.
• Three completed and signed reference forms, at least two of the three should be from people who have known you in a professional or academic setting.
• Resume including relevant employment and volunteer experience.

Please note: Applicants with a criminal history record may not be eligible for social work licensure. For more information contact the Board of Social Work licensure in the state that you wish to reside and be licensed. A listing of boards by state is available online. In addition, applicants need to be aware that many social service agencies that meet our requirements for field/practicum placements now require background checks, some at the student’s expense. These are the policies of social service agencies throughout this area, not The University of Iowa or School of Social Work policy. A criminal history may limit or prohibit a student's ability to obtain a field placement as well as limit or prohibit employment in social service agencies following graduation with a BSW/MSW degree.

E. Transfer into the MSW Program
Applications from students seeking to transfer from another MSW program are processed if the applicant meets the following conditions:

• All admission criteria previously specified.
• Completed and signed reference form from advisor and other faculty from previous school.
• Agree to complete at least 36 semester hours of coursework after admission to the MSW program at Iowa and agree to meet all requirements of the Iowa program.
• Timeline: Transfer requests may be made in any semester, but accepted applicants may only register for required courses when prerequisites have been met. This may mean a delay in matriculation.
• Transfer requests must be first directed to the School’s Admission Office so that the School can notify Graduate Admissions that a transfer request is coming and should be reviewed.

F. Reaplication
Reaplication is required of students who:
• Withdraw from the program.
• Do not enroll in classes for two (2) consecutive semesters.
• Were admitted to the program but did not enroll in classes and did not receive written permission to defer enrollment.
• Submitted completed applications but were denied admission.
• Were dismissed from the program.

G. Deferment
If an applicant cannot enroll for the academic year accepted, a written request for delaying the enrollment date until the next academic year may be made. Granting of the request is at the discretion of the Program Administrator. Generally, such requests are granted only because of extenuating circumstances.
II. Application Process

Applications will be accepted starting September 1 for the following academic year. All applications must be completed, submitted online and received no later than February 1.

A. Applicants who meet the admission criteria will be notified by mail or email when the review process is complete. The entire pool of applicants will be reviewed by the admissions panel in February/March and will be notified of their status no later than April 15, 2015.

B. An application is considered complete when the following items are received:
   - Graduate College application and fee, apply and pay online.
   - School of Social Work Application form, completed online.
   - Undergraduate and graduate transcripts, submitted online (UI records provided automatically).
   - Statement of Purpose, submitted online.
   - 2 essays, submitted online.
   - Three completed, signed reference forms, including one employment and one academic reference, submitted online.
   - Resume, submitted online.

C. Completed applications will be reviewed with the timelines indicated in II.A. above. At least two members of the Admissions Panel will read each application and make recommendations to the Program Administrator. The Program Administrator will make the final recommendation to the Director of the School and to the Graduate College.

D. The School is limited in the number of students it can admit. Qualified applicants may be declined for lack of space in a class.

E. Social Work has a long history of dedication to social change and to the improvement of the well-being of oppressed groups. Oppressed groups include but are not limited to: African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, Gays, persons with disabilities, Hispanics, Lesbians, Southern Appalachian Anglos, the poor, older adults, women and children. Effort will be made to assure representation in the class of persons from the above groups, and diversity will be sought from among persons of different ages.

F. Applicants will be notified in writing of the admission decision by April 15 for all programs. Admission is not complete until the applicant has received a written offer of admission and:
   1. received, read, signed, and returned the Admission Agreement form confirming acceptance of admission center and practicum assignments.
   2. further agreeing on same form to be bound by the cultural inclusion effort and the following policies:
      a) Student Advancement Policy
      b) Statement on Academic Honesty
      c) Code of Ethics of the National Association and International Federation of Social Workers
      d) Practica Structure and Process Policy Statement

G. Reapplication
   1. For students who were never accepted to the program, application materials are kept on file by the Graduate College for 12 months and the School of Social Work for 36 months. All who wish to reapply must do so to both the Graduate College and the School of Social Work.
2. Applicants who are reapplying to the Graduate College within one academic year, contact Graduate Admissions, 319-335-1525, gradmail@uiowa.edu, to change your admission session (e.g.; fall 2014 to fall 2015). This reactivates your existing application in that office. If more than a year, the Grad College requires a complete new application. After two academic years, the School of Social Work requires a complete new application. Contact the School's Admissions Coordinator to request reapplication to the School of Social Work: susan-dirks@uiowa.edu.

3. If an applicant has a School of Social Work application on file at the time of reapplication, and it has been less than 2 academic years since the initial application, the following additional materials must be submitted for reapplication:
   a. A statement discussing the applicant's activities since the previous application and describing any changes in the applicant's personal situation which would affect program planning. You may opt to also rewrite your personal statement and/or essays if desired, according the current session instructions, page 5, III-D.
   b. A current completed signed reference form from the applicant's current employer and academic advisor (if formerly a student in the Iowa program).
   c. Transcripts for any coursework completed since previous application (other than UI).
   d. An updated 2015 completed and signed School of Social Work application form.
   e. An interview and additional reference(s) may be required.

4. For students who were accepted, enrolled and became inactive, materials are kept for ten years. After one academic year of being inactive, reapplication is necessary to be considered for readmission and recommence the program.

5. Readmitted students must meet all requirements of the current MSW program. Readmission is not complete until the applicant has received a written offer of admission and:
   a. received, read, signed and returned the Admission Agreement form confirming acceptance of admission center and practicum assignments.
   b. further agreeing on same form to be bound by the cultural inclusion effort and the following policies:
      1) Student Advancement Policy
      2) Statement on Academic Dishonesty
      3) Code of Ethics of the National Association and International Federation of Social Workers
      4) Practica Structure and Process Policy Statement

III. Additional Information about Admission Criteria for the Application

A. Academic Background

1. Students entering the professional curriculum must be capable of thinking critically about society, about people and their problems, and about expressions of culture such as art, literature, science, history and philosophy. Students must have a liberal arts academic background, including knowledge about social, psychological, and biological determinants of human behavior and of diverse cultures, social conditions, and social problems. This background is usually part of general education requirements in liberal arts programs. The School recommends that one of the science courses should be human biology. The University of Iowa provides course opportunities to students whose pre-professional work may require additional content in a certain area and the admissions panel reserves the right to recommend such course content as a condition of admission.
2. Students will be expected to demonstrate proficiency in basic word processing and spreadsheet applications prior to beginning the program.

B. Academic Potential
1. An undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale is required, or a minimum of 12 semester hours of graduate level courses at 3.0 or above. The official admission GPA is calculated by the Graduate Admissions office, 107 Calvin Hall, Iowa City IA 52242. The GPA may be cumulative, or may be based on the GPA from the degree conferring school.

2. If the undergraduate GPA is below 3.0, and no graduate hours have yet been earned, an applicant may choose to enroll in graduate level courses as a non-degree student, earning 12 semester hours of letter-graded graduate work to become eligible for admission. Non-degree students are allowed to earn a maximum of 12 semester hours. Non-degree students are not eligible for financial aid. For assistance in calculating your admissions GPA, submit transcripts to the Graduate Admissions office, 107 Calvin Hall, Iowa City IA 52242.

3. In exceptional cases where the GPA is below 3.0, the admissions panel may determine that there is sufficient evidence of scholastic ability to request an exemption from the Graduate College. In this event, the Director of Admissions may opt to process a petition to the Graduate College Dean. Permission is granted only if there is sufficient evidence of the student’s academic and/or professional achievement indicating his/her potential for success in a graduate program.

C. Proficiency in English
1. Non-native English speaking students who are admitted are required to pass the overall English Proficiency Composition exam administered by the University’s Linguistics Department/ESL Program. Failure to pass this exam will result in an automatic transfer to the part-time program. If and when the exam is passed, the student may be reinstated to the full-time program in consultation with the Advisor and Program Administrator.

2. The course structure for international students may be individualized depending on English language proficiency, educational background, and professional experience.

D. Guidelines for Completing the Statement of Purpose, Essays, Reference Forms, and Resume
Evidence of a combination of personal qualities and professional experience will be provided through a statement of purpose, essays, references, and a resume. You are asked to visit the NASW website and review the Code of Ethics.

1. Statement of Purpose
The statement of purpose is a significant part of the application materials. Part I and Part II combined may be up to 1500 words. In addition, there are 2 essays, as described in Part III. The statement of purpose should address the following qualities and competencies of the applicant:

Part I:
Discuss your motivation for, expectations regarding, and commitment to the program at The University of Iowa. Include particular assets that you would bring to the School and the profession, as well as areas in which you would most like to grow academically and professionally. Discuss any major challenges you have faced or are facing with regard to your choice of the social work profession and your readiness to undertake graduate study. Address how you intend to balance
graduate study with other responsibilities you have. Identify your short and long term goals as a professional social worker and how you expect the University of Iowa School of Social Work's curriculum and faculty will help you prepare to achieve those goals.

Part II:
Provide a description of paid, volunteer, practicum and life experience relevant to social work. How have those experiences influenced your decision to pursue a career in social work at the master's level. Include a description of any experience relative to working with diverse populations and those experiencing oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as a consequence of difference.

Part III:
Provide an essay for each of the following. Each essay may be up to 750 words apiece:

a. Describe a real or hypothetical professional situation in which social work values and your personal values have been or could be in conflict (identify relevant values). Discuss how Social Work values and ethics did or would guide your behavior to resolve the conflict. It is expected that you will consult and use the NASW Code of Ethics in your essay.

b. Discuss a social change strategy you would recommend or have implemented to address a social problem about which you are concerned. Detail the factors that would contribute (or did contribute) to the success/effectiveness of this change strategy.

The Admissions Committee will review the statement of purpose with the following competencies in mind: communication skills, breadth and depth of experience, orientation to social work practice, social work values and ethics, ability to analyze and synthesize and emotional capacity and judgment. A demonstration of graduate level writing skills is expected.

2. Reference Forms

a. Reference forms will be examined for evidence of the same criteria as listed for the statement of purpose previously (section D.1. above). Completion of the form is required; however, a letter may also accompany the form.

Reference writers are asked to comment on the applicant's intelligence, maturity, sound judgment, compassion, self-awareness, adaptability, a sense of responsibility and resourcefulness, and their academic and professional promise within this context. The reference writer is asked for general comments as well as specific examples of the applicant's experiences as reflecting a desire and ability to enter the profession of social work.

The referee is also asked to rate and comment on the applicant relative to other students, employees, or people interested in social work that they have known, on the following qualities: Sensitivity and capacity for accepting differences in race, class, culture, lifestyles and ideas. Academic performance, intellectual ability, maturity/emotional stability, oral communication skills, written communication skills, openness to learning with capacity to change; ability to think critically, capacity for leadership, ability to work with others, attitudes and behaviors reflecting social work values and ethics, and interpersonal skills.

b. The applicant is responsible for providing three completed and signed reference forms that show evidence of the applicant's potential for graduate social work education and practice. References from social work practitioners, allied professionals, and educators are preferred.
1) At least one should be an academic reference regarding the applicant's college experience.

2) If ever employed in social work or a related field, at least one of these references should be provided from the applicant's most recent employer.

3) The applicant will indicate whether she/he has waived the right to review the recommendation. All recommendations are destroyed once an applicant has matriculated. Applicants not approved for admission have no access to their file.

3. Resume
Provide a resume which includes relevant employment and volunteer experience with dates and whether part-time or full-time.

E. School of Social Work Departmental Application Form – explanation of each item
The following information is intended to clarify the items to which you must respond on the School of Social Work Application Form:

Item 1: How did you learn about our program
List how you first heard about our program.

Item 2: Criminal background
Applicants with a criminal history record may not be eligible for practicum placement or social work licensure, see page 2, 1-D.

Item 3: Related employment experience
Note your employment experience in Social Work or related field in full-time equivalence.

Item 4: Minimum hours required for the degree standing
Applicants who have completed a BA in Social Work from a Council on Social Work Education accredited program must complete a minimum of 48 semester hours for the MSW. Students who do not have a CSWE accredited BA in social work or BSW degree must complete a minimum of 60 semester hours of coursework for the MSW program.

Item 5: Choice of Center and Program

Choice of Center

The University of Iowa School of Social Work offers the MSW program in four locations: Iowa City, Des Moines, the Quad Cities and Sioux City.

a. On the central campus in Iowa City and at the Des Moines Social Work Educational Center (located at John and Mary Pappajohn Education Center, 1200 Grand AVE in downtown Des Moines), both the full-time and part-time programs are offered.

b. In the Quad Cities and Sioux City Social Work Educational Centers, the program is offered in sequence every three years. This year both the Quad Cities and Sioux City cohorts are currently underway and we are not accepting applications at this time.

c. Students must enroll for courses in the semester in which they are admitted and must thereafter follow the structured sequenced program which has been designed for
Choice of Program

The University of Iowa School of Social Work offers the MSW degree on a full-time and a part-time basis.

a. The full-time program requires completion of the MSW in five or six semesters.

b. The three year program requires students to register for an average of three courses each semester.

c. The part-time program requires completion of the MSW within 4 calendar years with a minimum registration of 2 courses in each of the fall and spring semesters. It is intended for students for whom full-time study would be a severe hardship due to financial or family reasons. However, courses are not always offered during evening and weekend hours. Please be aware that there are times in the MSW program when students will find outside employment very difficult, if not impossible. These times are when students are fulfilling the requirements for the Foundation Practicum (30 days in the spring semester of the first year) and the Advanced Practicum (100 or 120 days in the fall and spring semester of the second year). Combining 3-4 days/week in practicum with course work obviates the possibility of continuing in full-time employment. Before registering in the MSW program, students should make plans to reduce or eliminate their outside employment while they are in Foundation and Advanced Practicum.

d. Joint Degree Applications (Iowa City Center)

1) If you intend to pursue a joint degree, complete the application for each program and please indicate the name of the other department or college.

2) Formal joint degree programs are possible with the School of Urban and Regional Planning and the College of Law. Students must be accepted into each department through its regular admission process. 10 to 12 semester hours in each program may be applied to the other.

3) Informal joint degrees are possible as well with other Master’s programs in Liberal Arts or with other colleges.

4) Joint degree applicants to the School of Social Work will be evaluated on the same basis as full-time applicants and the same admission procedure will apply.

5) Joint degree applicants must have an interview with a faculty person or the Program Administrator regarding their program.

Item 6a: Concentration

The family-centered practice concentration teaches specific knowledge and skills necessary for advanced social work practice with individuals and families. The integrated practice concentration teaches methods of advanced practice that empower
organizational and community change at multiple system levels. Applicants are asked to indicate the concentration they are most likely to pursue, as well as their specialized interest areas. Concentrations are discussed at the Informational Meetings. Complete descriptions are found in the University of Iowa School of Social Work catalog.

Item 6b: Primary curriculum interest(s)
For the purpose of matching interests with a faculty advisor, list primary interest(s).

Item 7: Practicum Location
The applicant’s preferences for a practicum location assist the School with planning. Practicum planning occurs in the fall semester for spring semester foundation practicum, in the spring for summer foundation practicum and in February for fall advanced practicum placements. Please see the practicum policy enclosed.

F. Additional Information –Financial Arrangements and Transcripts

Financial Arrangements
The School of Social Work may have a very limited number of research and teaching assistantships for MSW students. These cannot be applied for prior to April 15, after admission decisions are final. Faculty select applicants based on financial need, previous experience and interests related to the position. Admitted students will be directed to assistantship application materials on our web site. Visit the web for UI financial aid information including loans and student employment, contact: financial-aid@uiowa.edu or call 319-335-1450. Admitted students may also seek assistantships and awards offered in other departments outside of the School of Social Work:
http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/funding-your-education?portal=prospective-students

Additional Information about Transcripts
Official transcripts are required to be sent from all previous and current educational institutions to the University of Iowa Graduate Admissions Office, 115 Calvin Hall, Iowa City IA 52242. University of Iowa students and alumni need not supply University of Iowa transcripts to the graduate admissions office, as they are part of your permanent records and will be provided automatically, as you note in the online application that you have attended or are attending UI. Official transcripts from all other colleges and universities must be submitted. You may contact the graduate admissions office directly if you have questions or concerns about official transcripts from other institutions: gradmail@uiowa.edu, 319-335-1525. You are also expected to report if you are currently attending any outside institutions. You will have the opportunity to upload unofficial transcripts as a supplemental document in the online process, if you are currently attending at another school, or have difficulties assuring official copies will arrive before the February 1 deadline. We cannot review your file without academic records to view, so please upload unofficial copies if there is a doubt that official copies will arrive before the deadline. University of Iowa records do not need to be supplied, they are provided automatically.

Updated 8/1/14 for 2015
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
PRACTICA STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

I. Structure and Sequence

Practicum at the University of Iowa School of Social Work is composed of two levels of courses.

A. **Foundation Practica Course.** Students admitted to the M.S.W. program without a Bachelor's Degree with a major in social work from an accredited program are required to take Foundation Practicum: 210 contact hours during the spring semester of the **first year** for full-time students, during the summer semester of the **first year** for 3 year program students, or the spring semester of the **third year** for four year students. Three (3) semester hours of credit will be earned for successful completion of the Foundation Practicum.

B. **Advanced Practica Course.** All students admitted to the M.S.W. program are required to take the Advanced Practicum during the fall and spring of the **final year**. The minimum required 700 contact hours of Advanced Practicum will earn 10 semester hours of credit.

C. **Co-Requisite Courses.** Foundation Seminar for Foundation Practicum and Advanced Seminar I and II for Advanced Practicum.

II. Placement Assignment Process

Approved placement sites and agencies are within a 50 mile radius of Iowa City/Cedar Rapids, Quad-Cities, Des Moines, and Sioux City. The sites provide learning opportunities for the two concentrations and many fields of practice. Placements outside these practicum centers are permitted only in extraordinary circumstances and are contingent upon the ability of the practicum instructor and student to travel to the School of Social Work center for meetings with Field Coordinators.

A. **Foundation Practica** are assigned by either the Practicum Director or, in the Quad Cities, Des Moines, and Sioux City centers, by the Center Practicum Administrator.

B. **Advanced Practica** are developed during a process that starts in the first year. Failure to obtain a practicum after five interviews will result in reconsideration of the student's suitability for advancement in the MSW program.
III. Employment While a MSW Student

The School of Social Work is committed to part-time graduate social work education. The School endeavors to educate as broad a cross section of students as possible, including non-traditional students who are older, who must work to support families, and who therefore find it difficult to be full-time students.

There are times in the MSW program, however, when part-time students will likely find concurrent full-time employment very difficult, if not impossible. These times are when students are fulfilling the requirements for the Foundation Practicum (210 hours) and the Advanced Practicum (700 hours in the fall and spring semesters of the final year). Combining 3-4 days/week in practicum with course work obviates the possibility of continuing in full-time employment.

Before registering in the MSW program, part-time students must make plans to reduce or eliminate their outside employment while they are in Foundation and Advanced Practicum.

Practica are designed to extend and integrate learning achieved in class with practice in the field. The student has an opportunity to employ social work interventions and ethical decision making processes with different client populations at multiple levels. A particular focus is the application of research to social work theory and practice, including the evaluation of interventions and outcomes. Because of the importance of practica to the overall preparation of students for the profession, as dictated by the Council on Social Work Education Accreditation Standards, work experience prior to admission into the M.S.W. program cannot meet the practica requirements.