Admissions Policies and Procedures

Please read all of this information very carefully. Prospective PhD students apply online.

For prospective students applying to the combined MSW/PhD program, you will need to complete the application process in full for BOTH the MSW and PhD programs online, including references. For applicants to the combined MSW/PhD program, the MSW application is outlined here: http://clas.uiowa.edu/socialwork/graduate-program/apply.

Contact the program administrator Kate Kemp if you would like to discuss your eligibility for the combined MSW/PhD program: kate-kemp@uiowa.edu
Contact the PhD program director May Guo to discuss the PhD program: man-guo@uiowa.edu
Contact the admissions coordinator with questions about the application process: susan-dirks@uiowa.edu

Four-year and Five-year Program

Our PhD program is a four-year program, with a minimum of three years of financial support at the time of admission. A small number of applicants (1 – 2 each year) who do not have the resources to pursue a program full-time may be admitted to the five-year program. Please contact the director of the PhD program if you are interested in the five-year program. Prospective students applying to the MSW/PhD program will be admitted on a full-time basis only.

Size of Cohort

To ensure that all our doctoral students receive mentoring, we typically admit 3 – 4 students annually. About 35% of applicants are admitted.

Admission Requirements

1. Students are required to have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, and a minimum undergraduate grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
2. Applicants applying only to the PhD program are required to have a MSW or a master's degree in a related field, such as public policy, public health, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, education, nursing, or anthropology.

3. For applicants who took the GRE exam prior to August 1, 2011, we prefer a score of at least 575 for the verbal section and for the quantitative section OR a composite score of at least 1,150. http://www.takethegre.com/prior-test-format. For applicants who took the revised GRE exam after July 2011, we prefer a score of 155 for the verbal section and for the quantitative section OR a composite score of at least 310. A minimum analytic writing score has not been established.

4. Students should have completed an introductory statistics course and received a grade of B or higher. An introductory statistics course includes graphing techniques for presenting data, descriptive statistics, correlation, introduction to regression, elementary probability models, and tests of significance. Research methods courses taken in a MSW program typically do not meet the criteria for an introductory statistics course. Applicants who have not taken an introductory statistics course must complete one before beginning the combined MSW/PhD and PhD programs. Under unusual circumstances, a highly qualified applicant may be conditionally admitted into the program without having taken a statistics course (e.g., has a high score on the quantitative section of the GRE or taken other mathematics courses). However, applicants still must successfully complete an introductory statistics course the spring or summer semester prior to beginning the MSW/PhD or PhD program. An introductory statistics course is offered at the University of Iowa during the summer.

5. For international applicants, you must have a minimum score of 100 on the TOEFL iBT Total Score or minimum of 7 on the IELTS Overall Band Score, with no IELTS sub-score less than 6.0. A score of 26 on the speaking portion of the TOEFL is preferred. Automatic waivers of the TOEFL or IELTS requirement are granted for people 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.

Admission and Selection Process

We begin accepting applications September 1 for the following academic year. Applications are due on February 1. Admission decisions are made in February. Typically, all applications are evaluated on the same day. Applicants are notified of our decision by April 1 in writing. Some years we have had a waiting list. If you are placed on the waiting list, you will be notified of this decision by April 1. Please notify the School immediately if your address, phone number, or e-mail changes.

We evaluate applicants based on their potential to independently conduct and disseminate scholarship that contributes to policy or practice and on their potential to prepare students to educate future social workers. Because we are only able to provide mentoring and support to a limited number of applicants, some qualified applicants unfortunately are declined admission. Occasionally, applicants who are declined are encouraged to reapply in a subsequent year.