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School of Social Work

Overview of Program Options

Master in Social Work Program Options

The University of Iowa School of Social Work has offered the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited MSW program continuously since 1951. Currently – two options to complete the MSW are available, depending upon the applicant's prior preparation. Applicants to either of these options, at any of our centers, complete the same application.

- **Advanced Standing** - designed for those who have completed the BA in Social Work or BSW from a CSWE-accredited social work degree program
 - Courses start in the summer
 - Available full-time or part-time
 - Can be completed in 1 or 2 years in Iowa City or Des Moines
 - Can be completed in 2 years in Sioux City or Online
- **Regular Standing** – designed for those who have completed a degree in a discipline other than a CSWE-accredited social work degree program.
 - Courses start in the fall
 - Available full-time or part-time
 - Can be completed in 2, 3, or 4 years in Iowa City, Des Moines or Online

Learning Centers Accepting Admission in 2027

For 2026 admission, the following Learning Centers are open:

- **Iowa City*** - Accepting Advanced & Regular Standing applications
- **Des Moines*** - Accepting Advanced & Regular Standing applications
- **Sioux City** - Accepting Advanced Standing applications ONLY
- **Online** - Accepting Advanced & Regular Standing applications
 - *Students admitted to the MSW Online Program must reside in one of the following states: **Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota or Wisconsin.***

There is no hybrid version of the MSW program. Applicants who accept an offer for admission will be expected to enroll in the required social work courses at the Learning Center for which they apply. In-person Learning Centers will require students to be in-person, in the classroom. Required social work course sections affiliated with the Online program will be held starting at 5:30PM CT via Zoom Monday-Thursday.

*Advanced Standing 1-year-track is only available in Iowa City and Des Moines.

Application Deadlines

Advanced Standing MSW Program Admissions Table

LEARNING CENTER	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM OPTIONS	PROGRAM STARTS	EARLY REVIEW APPLICATION DEADLINE	FINAL APPLICATION DEADLINE
Iowa City & Des Moines ONLY	In-Person	1-Year	Summer 2027	N/A	December 1, 2026
Iowa City & Des Moines	In-Person	2-Year	Summer 2027	December 1, 2026	February 1, 2027
Online	Synchronous via Zoom	2-Year	Summer 2027	December 1, 2026	February 1, 2027
Sioux City	In-Person & Synchronous via Zoom	2-Year	Summer 2027	December 1, 2026	February 1, 2027

Regular Standing MSW Program Admissions Table

LEARNING CENTER	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM OPTIONS	PROGRAM STARTS	EARLY REVIEW APPLICATION DEADLINE	FINAL APPLICATION DEADLINE
Iowa City & Des Moines	In-Person	2-, 3- or 4, Year	Fall 2027	December 1, 2026	February 1, 2027
Online	Synchronous via Zoom	2-, 3- or 4, Year	Fall 2027	December 1, 2026	February 1, 2027

Applications completed by December 1, 2026 will receive an admission decision by end of January 2027.

Applications completed by February 1, 2027 will receive an admission decision by end of March 2027.

Questions may be directed to: ssw-admissions@uiowa.edu, 319-335-1250.

School of Social Work

MSW Admissions Policy

I. Criteria for Admission

Admission to the Master's program at The University of Iowa School of Social Work (SSW) 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 a Regionally Accredited American College or University or an equivalent degree from another country as determined by the Office of Graduate Admissions.
 - 2. Competency with personal computers is expected.
- B. Academic Potential
 - 1. A minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or the foreign equivalent as determined by the Office of Graduate Admissions. Completion of the GRE exam is not required.
 - 2. The SSW may petition the Graduate College dean for admission of a student whose grade point average is less than 3.00 if there is sufficient evidence of the student's academic and/or professional achievement indicating their potential for success in the MSW program.

- C. Proficiency in English

For international applicants, you must have a minimum score of

- 100 on the TOEFL iBT Total Score; a score of 26 on the speaking portion of the TOEFL is preferred; or
- 7 on the IELTS Overall Band Score, with no IELTS sub-score less than 6.0.; or
- 140 on the DuoLingo English Test.
- Waiver eligibility guidelines posted [here](#).
- The course structure for international students may be individualized depending on English language proficiency, educational background, and professional experience.

All incoming international students whose first language is not English are required to take an on-campus [English Proficiency Evaluation](#) upon arrival unless they meet any of the exceptions listed [here](#).

- 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: strong 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 application components (See Section II) uploaded to the application.

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 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 practicum placement as well as limit or prohibit employment in social service agencies following graduation.

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 recommendation form from advisor and other faculty from previous school.
- Per [the policies of the Graduate College](#), transfer students admitted must [complete a minimum of 24 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.
- If admitted and you've previously taken graduate-level courses when enrolled as a graduate student, you may request the SSW to review and consider transfer of credits. Criteria and details for the process to request a review of graduate-level transfer course outlines can be found on our [Advising webpage](#).
- Contact: ssw-admissions@uiowa.edu for further guidance related to evaluation of previous courses.
- Contact ssw-admissions@uiowa.edu if you are currently enrolled in another UI graduate program and you're interested to change to or add the MSW.

F. Reapplication

Reapplication is required of students who:

- Withdraw from the program.
- Do not enroll in classes for three (3) consecutive semesters (includes fall, spring and summer).
- 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.

At times, admitted students request a leave of absence. Typically, an approved leave of absence does not extend beyond 12 months. If a student does not return within the time frame as noted in the approved leave of absence or the student has been absent (not enrolled in courses) from the university for three consecutive semesters, the student follows the instructions posted by the Graduate College [here](#) and

contacts ssw-admissions@uiowa.edu to learn what the SSW requires to resume studies which may include reapplying.

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 and Admissions Manager. Generally, such requests are granted only because of extenuating circumstances.

II. Application Process

A. An application is considered complete when the following items are received:

- The University's [Graduate College Application](#), apply and pay online.
- A School of Social Work MSW Supplemental (Departmental) Data Form.
- Statement of Purpose
- Resume including relevant employment and volunteer experience.
- Two completed recommendation forms, one academic and one employment-based, if applicable, submitted online by the reference writers. References from professional settings are recommended.
- Unofficial transcripts from all colleges attended, other than University of Iowa, and record of current registration, if currently attending.
- Additional materials for international applicants, and Advanced Standing one-year track applicants.

B. If there are enrollment limits, qualified applicants may be waitlisted.

C. Applicants will be notified via email of the admission decision with the timelines indicated above. The 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 region.
2. Further agreeing on same form to be bound by the cultural inclusion effort and the following policies:
 - a) Code of Ethics of the National Association and International Federation of Social Workers;
 - b) [Appendix B](#) – MSW Student Advancement Policy, Academic Honesty, Practica Structure and Process Policy Statement; and
 - c) The [UI Code of Student Life](#).

D. Reapplication

1. For applicants who were never accepted to the program, application materials are kept on file by the Graduate College for 36 months and are accessible to the School of Social Work. All who wish to reapply must do so to both the Graduate College and the School of Social Work.
2. If an applicant who was never accepted and decides to reapply the following year, they can request their current application session be updated by contacting the Graduate Admissions Office: gradmail@uiowa.edu, 319-335-1525. A Graduate College application can only be forwarded one time. The MSW specific application components may also be forwarded and/or

the applicant can upload new application components. The components must correlate with the current admission session requirements (see Application Components section below for current requirements). Contact: ssw-admissions@uiowa.edu with questions.

3. If an accepted and enrolled student in good standing becomes inactive or exceeds the timeframe indicated in an approved leave of absence, the student must follow the instructions posted by the Graduate College [here](#) and contact ssw-admissions@uiowa.edu for guidance to resume MSW courses.
4. 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 the applicant has submitted a signed Admission Agreement form confirming acceptance of admission center and practicum region.

III. MSW Application Components

- A. Guidelines for Completing the Statement of Purpose, Recommendation Forms, and Resume**
Evidence of a combination of personal qualities and professional experience will be provided through a statement of purpose, references, a resume, and supplemental data form (**details below**). These documents will be reviewed 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.

1. Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose will be evaluated based on how well our program will help you meet your goals and how well your goals and interests appear to align with the social work profession.

Begin your Statement of Purpose with these identifying points at the top of the document:

Last Name, First Name, University ID

The MSW Center location to which you wish to apply

Statement of Purpose

Please address the following points in a **two-page, double-spaced statement**.

1. Describe your short and long term professional social work goals, including potential areas of interest and goals related to creating a more just society. Examples may include:
 - a. the client population you want to work with;
 - b. whether you want to work at the micro, mezzo or macro levels;
 - c. the type of social change you want to advocate for; and
 - d. the environment you want to work in.
2. Of the many options you have for an advanced degree, discuss why you are choosing social work. Discuss your reflections concerning areas of strength that you bring to the profession, and areas of development that you will focus on during the master's program.
3. Describe your plan for achieving and maintaining academic success given the program structure of the center to which you're applying ([Des Moines](#), [Iowa City](#), [Sioux City](#), or [Online](#)), identifying the resources you will draw upon to be successful, such as academic, personal, professional, financial,

and technical. Describe any modifications you will need to make to your schedule and personal circumstances to be successful.

Name the file “Statement of Purpose” and upload it to your Admissions Profile in [MyUI](#).

Required for One-Year Advanced Standing program in Des Moines or Iowa City ONLY, append an additional essay to Statement of Purpose.

Do not complete this section if you are applying to the: two-year, 36 s.h. Advanced Standing program in Des Moines or Iowa City; the 54 s.h. Regular Standing program in Des Moines or Iowa City; or the Online program.

1. Add the heading “**One-year Advanced Standing Program**”
2. Write an additional, **up to one-page** essay describing:
 - a. The programs, agencies or organizations you are considering for your specialized practicum, identifying the agencies by name and the learning opportunities you seek.
 - b. Lessons from your social work experience thus far that inform your identified practice interests and the learning opportunities you seek.

Recommendation Forms

All applicants are responsible for providing email addresses and assuring that two completed recommendation forms are provided. Completion of the form is required; however, a letter may also accompany the form. Recommendations from social work practitioners, allied professionals, and educators are preferred. The applicant will indicate whether they have waived the right to review the recommendation. All recommendations are destroyed once an applicant has matriculated. Applicants not approved for admission do not have access to their file.

- At least one should be an academic recommendation regarding the applicant’s college experience.
 - An applicant who is unable to provide an academic recommendation may, if absolutely necessary, list a professional reference who can speak to the applicant’s academic abilities. **For example**, the reference may have administered a work training to the applicant.
 - **For recent graduates**- Should an applicant decide to list a professional reference rather than an academic reference, they must provide 2-3 sentences in their Statement of Purpose “why” an academic reference is not listed.
- If ever employed in social work or a related field, the other recommendation may be provided from an applicant’s recent employer.

Recommendation 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 recommendation 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; maturity/emotional stability; ability to seek and accept and effectively use feedback; clarity of focus regarding career goals and areas for development/growth; attitudes and behaviors reflecting social work values and ethics; ability to manage professional relationships and boundaries; commitment to social justice

and social change; oral communication skills; written communication skills; ability to think critically and capacity to successfully complete a graduate level program.

Resume

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

School of Social Work Departmental Supplemental Data Form

You will complete an online form - this is an explanation of each item.

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, D.

Item 3. Social Work Degree

Applicants who have completed a BA in Social Work or BSW from a Council on Social Work Education accredited program enter the name and location of the conferring Institution, or "NA" if degree major is not social work.

Item 4 Corresponding Program

Identify the number of years to complete the program for the program option you've selected.

Item 5: Specialization

The **Clinical Practice Specialization** teaches specific knowledge and skills necessary for advanced social work practice with individuals and families. The **Leadership Practice Specialization** teaches methods of advanced practice that empower organizational and community change at multiple system levels. Applicants are asked to indicate the specialization they are most likely to pursue, as well as their specialized interest areas. Specializations are discussed at the Informational Sessions. Complete descriptions are found in The University of Iowa School of Social Work [catalog](#).

Item 6: Primary Curriculum Interest(s)

For the purpose of matching interests with a faculty advisor, list primary interest(s).

Additional Information –Financial Arrangements and Transcripts

Financial Arrangements

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 available to them in various departments across the University via the student job posting website, Handshake: <http://grad.admissions.uiowa.edu/finances>

Additional Information about Transcripts

If admitted to the MSW program, official transcripts are required to be sent from all previous and current educational institutions to: admissions@uiowa.edu. 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 record and will be provided automatically. Official transcripts from all other colleges and universities must be submitted to the UI Graduate Admissions office. An exception to this is if you were an undergraduate student at UI and outside transcripts were previously submitted as part of your BA requirements. You are also expected to report if you are currently attending any outside institutions. You will have the opportunity to upload unofficial transcripts during the application process.

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.

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

PRACTICUM 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. **Generalist Practicum Course.** Students admitted to the MSW program without a bachelor's degree with a major in social work from an accredited program are required to take Generalist Practicum: 300 contact hours during the spring semester of the **first year** for full-time students; and during the spring semester of the **second year** for 3-year and 4-year program students. Three (3) semester hours of credit will be earned for successful completion of the Generalist Practicum.
- B. **Specialized Practicum Course.** All students admitted to the MSW program are required to take the Practicum with Clinical or Leadership Specialization or Practicum in School Social Work during the fall and spring of the **final year**. The minimum required 600 contact hours of Practicum with Clinical or Leadership Specialization will earn 6 semester hours of credit.
- C. **Co-Requisite Courses.** All students in practicum are required to enroll in a concurrent seminar: Generalist Practicum Seminar for Generalist Practicum and the Clinical or Leadership Practicum Seminar I and II for the Practicum with Clinical or Leadership Specialization or Practicum in School Social Work.

II. Practicum Assignment Process

Most established practicum sites for UISSW are located within a 50-mile radius of Des Moines, Iowa City, Sioux City, or the Quad Cities, and additional sites have been established across Iowa and in the 6 surrounding states eligible for the Online program. The sites provide learning opportunities for the two specializations and many fields of practice. Students may complete practicum with an established site, or work with the practicum administrator for their learning center to identify and establish a new site within the 7-state region of the UISSW.

During the practicum search process, students will contact and interview with agencies in their community. These are relationships for the student and the School of Social Work. It is crucial that students present themselves professionally when reaching out to and meeting agencies; this includes prompt, polite, and well-written communications, thoughtful engagement with the process, and appreciation for the investment agencies are giving to practicum students. Students should seek guidance as needed from their practicum administrator; additional resources are available through the Graduate College.

Each learning center follows its own timeline for students to obtain a practicum, based on the unique characteristics of that community. Below are descriptions of the general process; students

will receive specific instructions through their learning center's practicum administrator. Because practicum planning does not occur within an academic course, much of the communication from the practicum administrator will occur via email. Students are responsible for checking their University of Iowa email account in a timely manner. It is very important that students pay attention to instructions from the practicum administrator and to deadlines for securing a practicum, as not doing so may mean the student must change their academic plan and take practicum the following academic year.

- A. **Generalist Practicum** planning takes place in the semester preceding practicum. Students receive information through asynchronous platforms and live meetings to help them identify their learning needs and goals. Generalist practicum provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate generalist social work skills at the micro- to macro-practice levels. Students are expected to engage in the practicum planning process in a timely manner, to review the information and resources provided by the School, and to seek support from their learning center's practicum administrator throughout the process.
- B. **Specialized Practicum** planning occurs the spring semester before the academic year when the student will be in practicum. Specialist practicum learning goals reflect the student's chosen specialization – clinical or leadership.
 - a. Students must complete a practicum that aligns with their specialization and coursework. If students are completing a practicum in a school setting, they may register for Practicum in School Social Work but will follow the expectations of the learning plan for their specialization as applied to a school setting. Practicum in School Social Work is required for students seeking the School Social Work Endorsement.
 - b. Specialist practicum prepares students for post-graduate professional practice. Students generally seek a specialist practicum where they can practice skills and modalities they can apply in their first position after graduation. Students should keep an open mind about the settings where they can develop these skills, and seek guidance from their practicum administrator, advisor, and other mentors. Some practicum sites are competitive, with many students choosing the site as their first choice, and it is important that students identify and explore multiple options.

III. Employment While an 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 must work to support families, and who therefore find it difficult to be full-time students.

Students must be available to attend classes when they are scheduled. Thus, employed students need to have made arrangements with their employers to flex their work scheduled sufficiently to attend class. In addition, it is often challenging to adjust schedules when fulfilling the requirements for the Generalist Practicum (300 hours) and the Specialized Practicum (300 hours in the fall and spring semesters of the final year). Combining 3-4 days/week in practicum with course work will likely conflict with continuing in full-time employment.

Before registering in the MSW program, employed students must make plans to flex, reduce or eliminate their outside employment while they are in Generalist Practicum and Specialized Practicum.

Practicum is 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 practicum 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 practicum requirements.

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, associational preferences, or any other classification that deprives the person of consideration as an individual. The University also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to University facilities. For additional information <https://ocr.uiowa.edu/> (319) 335-0705.

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa-sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact School of Social Work Student Services Center at: ssw_office@iowa.uiowa.edu or phone: 319 335-1250.

6/9/2026