

IOWA

School of Social Work

MSW STUDENT HANDBOOK EFFECTIVE 2026

Edited June 2026

WELCOME

Welcome to the University of Iowa School of Social Work. You are beginning a professional education grounded in the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics ([NASW, 2021](#)). Through a systems perspective, the program emphasizes professional competence, leadership, and evidence-informed practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Our program focuses on interactions among systems. This perspective enables consideration of different system levels at the same time and provides social workers with a particularly useful structure of organizing knowledge about clinical and community interventions, case management, program development, and policy analysis and advocacy.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & RESOURCES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK DIRECTOR

Associate Professor Miriam Landsman, PhD, MSW

Miriam Landsman, PhD, is the Director of the School of Social Work. Dr. Landsman is also the Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice. Dr. Landsman's primary areas of research are family-centered approaches to child welfare practice, and development of the human services workforce.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Associate Professor Megan Gilster, PhD, MSW

Megan Gilster, PhD, is the Associate Director of the School of Social Work. Dr. Gilster is a Research Fellow in the Social and Education Policy Research Program in the University of Iowa Public Policy Center. Her research addresses how community and neighborhood conditions matter for the well-being of residents

MSW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Clinical Professor Stephen Cummings, MSW, ACSW, LISW

Stephen Cummings, MSW, ACSW, LISW, is the MSW Program Director. Professor Cummings is responsible for the development and maintenance of the MSW educational programs of the school and for resolving student problems related to the educational program and is an important resource for students. (Rm. 321-1A in North Hall, Iowa City. Professor Cummings also has an office in Des Moines, room 123, in the John and Mary Pappajohn Education Center.

MSW PRACTICUM DIRECTOR

Clinical Assistant Professor Peggy Trosper, MSW, LISW

The MSW Practicum Director provides leadership and oversight of the MSW and BA Practicum Programs and administers Iowa City (BA and MSW) practicum. The Des Moines, Online, and Sioux City programs have designated faculty who administer those practicum sites and processes.

ADVISORS

Advisors monitor the students' academic progress through the curriculum (see Policies Related to Academic Planning in Appendix B).

FACULTY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION POSITIONS

Role	Faculty/Staff Member
Director	Miriam Landsman
Associate Director	Megan Gilster
BA Program Director	Alison Oliver
MSW Program Director	Stephen Cummings
Director of Practicum Education	Peggy Trosper
Distance Education Administrator	Stephen Cummings
Ph.D. Program Director	Chris Veeh
National Resource Center Director	Miriam Landsman
Aging and Longevity Studies Certificate Program Coordinator	Mercedes-Bern Klug

MSW PROGRAM HANDBOOK AND WEBSITE RESOURCES

The MSW Handbook and School of Social Work website provide access to information about the curriculum and sequencing of courses, selected University, School and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) policies, and the administrative and committee structure of the school. While the Handbook is updated annually, timely updates are provided on the website: <https://socialwork.uiowa.edu/>.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

University administrative offices (e.g. The Office of the Registrar), social work faculty, staff and students rely upon University Email and LISTSERVs to communicate. Students are expected to check their university email account (@uiowa.edu) routinely. Refer to the University of Iowa's resource site for detailed information: <https://basbls.uc.uiowa.edu/advising/getting-started/university-email-and-office-365>.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Students provide feedback and input into the MSW program in several ways.

- Students evaluate each course and instructor using the university-wide Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT), which are reviewed by the Director each semester.

- All MSW students are invited to respond to an annual survey about their experiences in the MSW program and give input into the program's activities and course offerings. Survey results and MSW program next steps are shared with students in site specific or combined annual program meetings, which all students are invited to. Those meetings provide additional opportunities for student feedback on the next steps.
- The School selects MSW student representatives to serve on the Student Advisory Board. The Student Advisory Board (SAB) of School of Social Work serves as a platform for student voices to provide input into the academic and professional experiences across undergraduate and master's (in-person and online) programs.
- MSW students are encouraged to organize in the Graduate Social Work Student Organization. A formal UI Graduate Student Association may be renewed each year with the department and University. The MSW Director is the liaison.

Students have additional opportunities as a student and after graduation:

- MSW students may participate in the University of Iowa Graduate Student Senate: <https://gss.grad.uiowa.edu/>
- After graduating, MSW students can continue to be engaged with the school. We survey MSW alumni regularly after graduation.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Students admitted to the MSW program will establish a plan to finish their degree in one, two, three, or four years. Students are required to meet with their advisor shortly before the early registration period to be authorized to register. Authorization is required to progress to the next semester, or to graduation. While experience in volunteering, working, and life are valued, the CSWE does not permit the School of Social Work to grant academic credit for life experience or previous volunteer or work experience. Modifications to the structured sequenced program require both advisor approval and MSW Program Director, Practicum Education Director,. This process also aids in adequately planning for class size and practicum placements.

IMPORTANT EVENTS AND DEADLINES

SCHEDULE OF COURSES

All information provided by The University on policies and [deadlines](#), [registration procedures](#), [fees](#), schedules are available on the Registrar's Office website: <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/calendars-deadlines>).

GRADUATION AND COMMENCEMENT

Students in good standing with the School of Social Work and the Graduate College will be eligible to apply for graduation and participate in commencement. Students will receive updates regarding eligibility to graduate from the School of Social Work. Students are expected to be aware of their academic plan and eligibility for graduation. Questions regarding eligibility to graduate may be reviewed with the student's advisor.

- **Degree application:** Use the link on your [MyUI dashboard](#) to start the application process. Information is available regarding this process on the [Registrar's website](#). <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/degree-application>.

- Students are eligible to apply for graduation in the final semester, should they have completed all requirements of the MSW Program.
- **Commencement:** The Graduate College schedules Commencement Events for both May and December. Students are advised to monitor communication from the University of Iowa regarding planning for commencement events.
 - The School of Social Work has historically held events to recognize student graduation at various locations and dates in the spring. Announcements regarding these events are usually made in the spring semester; students are encouraged to monitor communications via their University email for details.

LICENSURE APPLICATION

For students seeking their LMSW license, Iowa and other states may allow the application process to begin in the final semester prior to graduation.

- State board examination: Most states, including Iowa, require students seeking licensure to pass the ASWB exam. Students may be able to take this exam in the final semester prior to graduation. The school will provide guidance via email announcements on current procedures, as details regarding this process are subject to change.

THE MSW PROGRAM

The specific mission of the MSW program is to prepare social workers for leadership in the profession and for advanced social work practice in one of two specializations: Clinical Practice or Leadership Practice.

The MSW Program develops high levels of skill in practice, applying the values and ethics of the social work profession to complex ethical issues. The research mission of the University ensures that students learn about faculty research, critical thinking, analytic and scientific ways of thinking, and practice and program evaluation.

GOALS OF THE MSW PROGRAM

1. ***To prepare students to shape the profession's future by providing education in clinical and leadership practice approaches using the person in environment framework.***
2. ***To prepare competent professionals for autonomous practice and leadership within the professional community that includes advanced interventions at multiple system levels, supervision, program development, program administration, training, evaluation of practice, dissemination of new models of practice, and policy development.***

The University of Iowa MSW program has been continually accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1951.

CSWE has adopted a competency-based education framework. A competency-based approach identifies and assesses what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in CSWE's education policy:

Competency-based education rests on a shared view of the nature of competence in professional practice. Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective

processes to practice situations in a culturally responsive, purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being.

The nine CSWE's competencies for social work are listed in this section with full descriptions in the CSWE's EPAS Standards: <https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/policies-process/2022epas/>

Each competency describes the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that make up the competency at the generalist level of practice, followed by a set of behaviors that integrate these components. These behaviors represent observable components of the competencies, and the descriptions that precede them represent the underlying content and processes that inform the behaviors.

MSW programs extend and enhance the nine social work competencies for each area of specialized practice—Leadership Practice and Clinical Practice. By extending and enhancing the competencies, programs provide master's-level students with the four dimensions (i.e., knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes) relevant to each area of specialized practice.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

REFERENCES

Council on Social Work Education. (2022). *Educational policy and accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master's social work programs*. <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/bb5d8afe-7680-42dc-a332-a6e6103f4998/2022-EPAS.pdf>

National Association of Social Workers. (2021). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>