Admission Requirements

Admission requirements of the School of Social Work are consistent with those of the Graduate School (see Admission Criteria section of this catalog). To be considered for admission to the Master of Social Work Program, a person must meet the following requirements prior to enrollment in the MSW Program:

- A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, including completion of a minimum of four courses in the humanities and/or fine arts, four courses in behavioral science and/or social science, one course in natural science, one course in college mathematics, and two courses in English composition (or the equivalent)
- For regular admission. A grade point average of at least 3.0 overall (based on a 4.0 system) or 3.0 for the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate work based on transcripts from all institutions attended
  For conditional admission. A GPA of at least 2.5 overall (based on a 4.0 system) for undergraduate work, and score at the 40th percentile on the Miller Analogies Test (MAT) or a combined score of 900 or higher on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) on the general test verbal and quantitative sections.
- A two-part written statement of purpose satisfactory to the MSW admissions committee
- Three letters of recommendation are required by the School of Social Work. The references should be able to objectively speak to your ability for graduate study and potential for social work. Letters from former professors are preferred, and at least one must be from a professor in your undergraduate major. If you have been employed in human services for one or more years, letters will be accepted from an employment supervisor. Letters from family members and friends are not appropriate.
- Reactivated admissions, transfers, and intermitting students will be evaluated according to admission policies and procedures for the academic year in which admission is requested.
- International students must meet the Graduate School's requirements for admission including the equivalent of a four-year bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. A student whose first language is not English must submit an official score report for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or must have earned a degree from an accredited U.S. college or university within the last three years. The minimum score for conditional admission to the Graduate School on the paper-based TOEFL (pBT) is 550 or 79 on the internet-based TOEFL (iBT), and 6.5 on the IELTS.

No academic credit, course waivers, or credit for field practicum shall be granted for life experience or previous work experience.

Admission with Advanced Standing. Students who hold the bachelor of social work degree from an institution accredited by the Council on Social Work Education may be admitted to the MSW program with advanced standing. Advanced-standing students enroll in MSW study for one full summer or spring session and one full academic year. In addition to the satisfaction of all admission requirements of the School, admission with advanced standing also requires a "B" average or better in all professional foundation courses, with no more than one "C" in professional courses and grades of "B" or better in field education courses.
The admissions committee reserves the right to make exceptions to admissions requirements in highly unusual situations and to determine the number of students that can be admitted to each program. In addition, the committee will seek to admit a cohort of students that is diverse in sex, racial and ethnic background, and geographic origin. The committee reserves the right to interview applicants.

**Application Procedure.** Applicants must provide the following:
- Application for admission to The University of Alabama, including nonrefundable $50 fee for domestic applications and $60 for international applications (payment of the fee must be in the form of a check or money order payable to The University of Alabama or payment online by credit card when applying online)
- Application materials for admission to the Graduate School
- Supplemental application materials or online application for admission to the School of Social Work
- Score report for the Graduate Record Examination or Miller Analogies Test, if required

For an application to be ready for review by the admissions committee of the School of Social Work, the Graduate School file must be completed and forwarded to the School of Social Work. Applicants must specify on the application whether they are applying for the two-year weekday program, the first-year Saturday program, or the advanced-standing program. Applications to the School of Social Work should be completed by February 1 for priority consideration for admission in the summer or fall term and for financial aid awards and by September 1 for the spring advanced-standing program. However, the Graduate School requests that their components of the application be received in their office six weeks prior to the February 1 and September 1 deadlines. Applications may be accepted on a space-available basis until April 1 for admission with advanced standing for summer term or the first-year Saturday program; until July 1 for admission in the fall term; and until November 1 for admission with advanced standing for spring semester.

Additional information is in the **Admission Criteria** section of this catalog.

Applicants interested in **transferring graduate credit** to the MSW program from another institution or graduate program must make a formal request after admission to the program. The request is initiated in the Graduate School with the form for **Request for Transfer of Graduate Credit**. Decisions regarding transfer of graduate credits will be made by the MSW Program Chair and the graduate school after the applicant is admitted.

Application forms and other information may be obtained by writing to The University of Alabama, School of Social Work, Student Services Office, Box 870314, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0314. Applicants may also obtain application materials at the School of Social Work website.

**Financial Aid**
Financial assistance through stipends, grants, and scholarships is available through the School of Social Work. Some stipends are available directly from the School; others are related to traineeships, with specified field education placements and/or curriculum requirements. Stipends and traineeships that may be available include Alabama Department of Human Resources stipends; an Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program stipend; child welfare traineeships; Sparks Clinics traineeships; Pediatric Pulmonary Health Care traineeships; Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility stipends; Bryce State Psychiatric stipends; Alabama
Department of Youth Services traineeships; and Veterans Administration traineeships. Additional traineeships become available on a year-by-year basis.

Contact The University of Alabama, School of Social Work, Student Services Office, Box 870314, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0314, or telephone (205) 348-5020, for application forms and further information. Students may also contact the UA Office of Student Financial Aid, Box 870162, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0162, or telephone (205) 348-6756, for applications for University-sponsored and other financial aid such as federal loans.

Degree Requirements

The master of social work (MSW) degree will be awarded to the student who has met the following requirements:

- Successful completion of 60 hours of approved courses including field education or 42 hours for students admitted with advanced standing
- Evidence of the capacity to perform in all aspects of the student's educational program at a satisfactory and responsible level, as judged by the faculty, and promise of further professional development (see the Master's Degree Program Student Handbook for further details)
- Students are expected to demonstrate writing proficiency at a graduate level. Writing skills may be evaluated through specialized assignments in foundation or advanced-standing courses, or through a proficiency examination. The student may be required to attend tutorial sessions until proficiency is demonstrated.

Time Limit Requirement. Work toward the MSW degree must be completed within four calendar years from the time the first class is taken.

Additional information concerning transfer of credit, time limit and all other Graduate School degree requirements is in the Degree Requirements section of this catalog.

MSW Program

The goal of the master of social work program of the University of Alabama School of Social Work is to educate social workers for advanced practice with an emphasis on public and non-profit social services and on community advocacy. The goal encompasses education for advanced practice in specific types of direct practice and in program assessment and administration, advocacy, and policy and reform roles. The program emphasizes preparation for practice specifically intended to benefit disadvantaged or oppressed people at the state and regional levels, and the program provides opportunities for students to prepare for practice based on this commitment at the national and international levels.

Building on the professional social work foundation, and within a focused area of study, the program prepares graduates

- for advanced social work practice in an area of concentration
- who will provide leadership in planning, administering, delivering, and evaluating social services
- who will advocate for social causes and justice, and work on reform efforts
- who will demonstrate a commitment to practice and service to benefit poor, oppressed, and other socially disadvantaged people, and to work toward the elimination of poverty, oppression, and discrimination
who value human diversity and display sensitivity to the uniqueness, commonalities, and richness of cultures and their constituents
who are committed to the values and ethics of social work
who engage in a continuous process of professional development through systematic inquiry, analysis, reflection, and participation in organized professional educational opportunities
who will contribute to the development of the profession of social work within the state, region, and nation and/or international communities

Curriculum. The MSW program is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The curriculum follows the curriculum policy requirements of the Council on Social Work Education and provides a balanced, integrated approach that includes a professional foundation and a choice of concentrations. The professional foundation curriculum taken the first year consists of coursework in the following:

- **Social work practice.** This area of the curriculum is designed to provide practice knowledge and competencies in working with individuals, groups, families, communities, and organizations.
- **Human behavior and the social environment.** This area of the curriculum helps the student to understand the whole person and the process of growth, change, adaptation, social functioning, and dysfunctioning in the environmental context, including family, groups, formal organizations, and communities. Courses in this area cover prenatal stages through the process of aging.
- **Social welfare policy and services.** This area of the curriculum is designed to help the student identify, appraise, analyze, and understand social change in its dynamic perspectives; the role and responsibility of social work as a profession in influencing social policy; and the delivery of service to individuals and society.
- **Research methods.** This area of the curriculum is designed to help the student understand social work and related research and the use of research for the improvement of services to individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.
- **Field education.** This area of the curriculum provides opportunities for students to integrate and apply knowledge, skills, and values in a social work practice context.

**MSW Curriculum Themes**

The MSW program emphasizes the following five themes underpinning the foundation and the concentration year objectives:

- **Life Course Perspective:** Social workers understand that the growth and development of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities are influenced by a range of psychological, social, historical, political and economic factors. The interaction of these factors with life events and life transitions contribute to the subsequent outcomes. This theme also serves as the conceptual framework for the entire MSW curriculum.
- **Valuing Diversity:** Social workers value and work respectfully with people who are different from themselves.
- **Critical and Reflective Thinking:** Critical and reflective thinking that challenges assumptions, and that is based on evidence to arrive at creative solutions, is the basis for competent social work practice.
- **Evidence-Based Practice:** Social workers favor interventions with demonstrated effectiveness. They are prepared to carefully evaluate practice and program outcomes.
- **Services to the Poor and Underserved:** Alabama ‘s poor and underserved receive
social services primarily from public and non-profit social service agencies. Social workers must be prepared to practice in these contexts and to challenge social injustice.

MSW Program Foundation Objectives

Foundation Year MSW students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice.
- Understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles, and practice accordingly.
- Practice without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skills related to clients’ age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice.
- Understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues.
- Apply the knowledge and skills of generalist social work perspective to practice with systems of all sizes.
- Use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the life span and the interactions among individuals and between individual and families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Analyze, formulate, and influence social policies.
- Evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions.
- Use communications skills differentially across client populations, colleagues, and communities.
- Use supervision and consultation appropriate to social work practice.
- Function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems and seek necessary organizational change.

Concentration Objectives

In professional social work intervention with children, youth, and their families, or adults and their families, students will demonstrate:

- The ability to effectively apply selected models and methods of advanced social work practice, consistent with social work values and ethics, with an emphasis in public and non-profit social services.
- The ability to use reflectively the theoretical approaches and knowledge bases underlying their practice with particular attention to the life course perspective.
- The ability to evaluate their own practice.
- The ability to analyze the impact of social welfare policies on clients and practice situations.
- The ability to practice in ways that are culturally and gender appropriate with low income persons and with those who have experienced social and economic injustice.