

SOCIAL WORK, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.)

Program mission

The VCU School of Social Work Ph.D. program prepares researchers and educators to generate, implement and communicate knowledge to advance social justice, improve human well-being and enhance the profession's impact on pressing social problems.

Program goals

The principal goal of the Ph.D. in Social Work program is to prepare a diverse student body whose research, teaching and scholarship will position them for leadership in advancing professional practice, social policy and social work education. To achieve this goal, the program prepares students to:

1. Conduct and disseminate high-quality research that furthers the knowledge base of the profession
2. Develop cutting-edge knowledge and skills for social work teaching and learning
3. Promote social welfare and social justice in and with local, national and global communities

Student learning outcomes

Upon completion of the required curriculum, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Understand and critique the history and philosophy of social work as a profession and academic discipline and draw implications for its current and future directions
2. Use rigorous methods and analytic strategies to conduct and disseminate high-quality research that contributes to the knowledge base of social work and related disciplines
3. Identify and critique the main social and behavioral science theories that inform knowledge development in their selected substantive area and in social work education
4. Articulate expertise in a selected substantive area relevant to social work and contextualize this expertise in a broader interdisciplinary frame of reference
5. Critically analyze the substance, function and contexts for formulation, implementation and evaluation of key social policies and draw implications for advocacy and social justice
6. Demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge, skills and values required for excellence as a social work educator

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/>) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/>)

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/candidacy/>)

Qualifying examination

Upon completion of all required course work, students are required to pass a qualifying examination. The exam comprises a proposal and related reading list, a comprehensive paper which the student develops independently and an oral examination. Upon successful completion of the qualifying examination, students are approved for registration for a minimum of one credit hour of dissertation research.

Dissertation

After passing the qualifying examination, students will propose, conduct and defend their dissertation with the guidance of a dissertation committee. The dissertation is a piece of independent research that addresses an issue of immediate relevance to the social work profession. Students may register for as many credits as needed/desired, but they must maintain continuous enrollment of at least one credit hour per semester (excluding summer) until they attain a minimum of nine dissertation credits and complete their dissertation. Successful completion of 54 credits of course work and the successful defense of the dissertation fulfill the requirements for the degree.

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the [academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements](https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/). (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>)

Apply online today. (<https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/>)

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
Ph.D.	Fall only	Jan 10	

Special requirements

- Submit all additional application materials (personal statement, reference letters, writing sample and resume/curriculum vita) through the Graduate Admissions online application. If desired, an additional copy may be sent directly to the School of Social Work c/o Ph.D. program coordinator.

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/>), applicants must meet the following minimum requirements.

Applicants to the program must have an earned master's degree in social work or a closely related discipline, as well as professional experience relevant to their career goals. The relationship between the applicants' professional experiences and their career objectives should be clearly articulated in the personal statements submitted with the application materials.

Applicants whose career goals include teaching in a bachelor's- and/or master's-level social work program should be aware that an M.S.W. degree and social work practice experience, along with the Ph.D., are often considered to be minimal job requirements. In addition, Council on Social Work Education accreditation standards currently require that individuals who want to teach practice courses, in particular, must have an M.S.W. and at least two years of post-B.S.W. or post-M.S.W. practice experience.

Submission of scores on the Graduate Record Examination (General Test) is optional. The institution code for VCU is 5570.

The normal course of study is full-time. All students must complete at least one year of full-time study prior to admission to candidacy.

Degree requirements

The Ph.D. curriculum is designed to enable students to specialize in a substantive area and increase their relevant theoretical and research skills. In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>), students must meet the following requirements.

A minimum of 54 graduate credit hours, comprising 27 credit hours of core course work common for all students; 12 credit hours of electives selected to suit the individual student's course of study as follows: three credit hours of advanced statistics, three credit hours of advanced statistics or research methods, three credit hours of theory, three credit hours of a course customized to the student's area of interest, three credit hours of qualifying examination and a minimum of nine credit hours of dissertation research. In addition to elective courses offered by

the program, students are encouraged to enroll in appropriate courses in other schools and departments at VCU with approval of their advisers. A minimum of 39 credit hours of course work, as outlined above is required before the qualifying examination. Upon completion of these credit hours, students will complete a three-credit hour social work teaching practicum. Graduate School requirements for candidacy exams and dissertation committees apply to students in this program. Up to six credit hours may be granted for courses completed at another university. Full-time students ordinarily complete 18 to 20 credit hours per academic year.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Core courses		
SWKD 701	Introduction to Advanced Quantitative Methods	3
SWKD 702	Introduction to Quantitative Data Analysis	4
SWKD 704	Introduction to Qualitative Methods	3
SWKD 705	Multivariate Analysis	3
SWKD 706	Proseminar I	1
SWKD 707	Proseminar II	1
SWKD 709	History and Philosophy of Social Work	3
SWKD 711	Social and Behavioral Science Theory for Social Work Research and Practice	3
SWKD 713	Social Policy Theory and Analysis	3
SWKD 716	Measurement in Social and Behavioral Sciences	3
Electives ¹		
• Advanced statistics and/or research courses		
Select two of the following:		6
ALHP 761	Health Science Research Design I	
ALHP 762	Multivariate Statistical Methods for Health Sciences	
BIOS/STAT 513	Mathematical Statistics I ²	
BIOS/STAT 514	Mathematical Statistics II ²	
BIOS 625	Categorical Data Analysis and Generalized Linear Models ²	
BIOS 631	Mixed Models and Longitudinal Data Analysis ²	
BIOS 635	Structural Equation Modeling ²	
EDUS 712	Mixed Methods Research	
EPID 606	Epidemiologic Methods	
EPID 651	Intermediate Epidemiologic Methods for Research	
EPID 652	Advanced Epidemiologic Methods and Data Analysis	
PSYC 683	Multilevel Modeling ²	
SBHD 636	Community-based Participatory Research	
SBHD 637	Program Evaluation	
STAT 546	Linear Models ²	
STAT 642	Design and Analysis of Experiments I ²	
STAT 643	Applied Linear Regression ²	
STAT 675	Time Series Analysis I ²	

STAT 744	Regression II ²	
SWKD 730	Applied Quantitative Research Seminar ²	
SWKD 797	Directed Research	
URSP 621	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems ²	
URSP 622	Community Socioeconomic Analysis Using GIS ²	
• Theory		
Select any approved 600-level course from ADLT, CRJS, DPAL, EDUS, EPID, GRTY, GSWS, GVPA, MGMT, PADM, PPAD, PSYC, SBHD, SOCY, URSP		3
• Additional elective courses or independent study		
Select an additional three credits customized to student's area of interest.		3
Qualifying exam		
SWKD 890	Qualifying Examination	3
Teaching		
SWKD 896	Social Work Teaching Practicum	3
Research		
SWKD 898	Dissertation Research (variable credit course; minimum of nine credits)	9
Total Hours		54

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In addition to elective courses offered by the program, students may enroll in appropriate courses in other schools and departments at VCU with approval of their advisors. Outside elective courses may be selected from classes at the 500 level or higher in BIOS, CCTR, CMSC, CLED, CRJS, ECSE, ECON, EDUS, ENVS, EPID, GSWS, GRTY, GVPA, GRAD, HADM, HCPR, HSEP, HGEN, HUMS, INFO, IDAS, IDDS, MASC, MATX, NURS, OVPR, PHAR, PSYC, PADM, PPAD, SBHD, SLWK, SWKD, SOCY, SEDP, STAT, SYSM, TEDU and USRP.

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One of these courses must be taken as the advanced statistics course.

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 54.

Contact

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Program website: socialwork.vcu.edu/academics/phd-in-social-work/
(<https://socialwork.vcu.edu/academics/phd-in-social-work/>)