

SOCIAL WORK, D.S.W.

Mission Statement of the DSW Program

The DSW Program at The University of Alabama is designed to increase specialization, independence, and leadership of social workers across systems and agencies in underserved communities. The program prepares advanced practitioners to lead efforts in promoting social and economic justice through service, advocacy, teaching, and research.

DSW Program

The DSW program is a part-time, primarily online, three-year program designed for experienced professional social workers seeking to advance their knowledge and skills. The program offers two specializations: **Advanced Clinical Practice** and **Organizational Leadership**. Students complete 45 credit hours of coursework, 27 credit hours of which are core courses and 18 credit hours of concentration courses. Students enroll in six credit hours each semester, Fall, Spring, and Summer. Courses are mostly asynchronous with several synchronous evening sessions required per course. Synchronous session dates are posted at the time of registration, two months before the start of each semester. The program is designed to be completed in three years.

DSW Program Curriculum

The DSW program is a part-time, primarily online, three-year program designed for experienced professional social workers seeking to advance their knowledge and skills. Students complete 45 credit hours of coursework, 18 of which are completed in the first year of study, 18 credits in the concentration year, and 9 capstone credits in the third year. Students take six credit hours each semester, Fall, Spring, and Summer. Courses are completed asynchronously with several synchronous evening sessions per semester. Synchronous session dates are posted at the time of registration, two months before the start of each semester. Students select their concentration at the start of their studies.

Learning Outcomes for the DSW Program

Upon completing the DSW Program, graduates will be able to:

- Demonstrate advanced social work practice skills in assessment, intervention and supervision at the micro, mezzo, and/or macro levels.
- Play an independent/leadership role in integrating advanced knowledge and theory on the social, economic, political, and philosophical conditions into health and human service delivery.
- Integrate knowledge about research methodology with social work practice knowledge to develop and lead strategies for continued evidence-based practice, practice evaluation, and scientific knowledge-building.
- To disseminate complex information about social work evidence, practice skills, scholarship, and interventions clearly and creatively to professional and academic audiences in written and oral formats.
- Identify, evaluate, and implement innovative and cutting-edge strategies to address complex social and health conditions.
- Lead teams to develop and implement social work advocacy and policy practice strategies to advanced clinical practice or organizational leadership, especially within the context of services for vulnerable and underserved communities.

- Independently develop, implement, and evaluate innovative interventions into practice that are theoretically and evidence-based.

Graduates of the Advanced Clinical Practice concentration will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge about new and advanced therapies and clinical assessment techniques with disadvantaged populations.
- Articulate the roles that institutional and societal discrimination have impacted clinical issues affecting disadvantaged populations.

Graduates of the Organizational Leadership concentration will be able to:

- Leverage evidence and human and organizational resources to design and implement new and innovative services for complex, disadvantaged client populations.
- Describe and implement ethical, effective, and innovative approaches to developing and managing community and organizational resources.

The Goals of the DSW Program

The programmatic goals are:

- To provide a rich, supportive environment that enables a diverse group of students to pursue and attain their academic, professional, clinical and/or leadership goals.
- To prepare students to integrate theory, evidence, and critical thought to develop innovative solutions for complex challenging issues experienced by agencies and populations at the local, regional, national, and/or global levels.
- To prepare graduates to be innovative and successful educators of future social workers.
- To prepare practitioners to use social work research methodologies to evaluate practice and translate evidence-based interventions into practice settings.
- To prepare advanced practitioner-scholars to incorporate theory, research, practice, and policy to contribute to existing knowledge on social work practice and advance social justice.
- To develop stewards of the social work profession within interprofessional settings who apply and enforce ethical standards and address ethical dilemmas in health and social service systems.
- To prepare advanced social workers to be effective and ethical managers within clinical, administrative, and/or community settings.
- To prepare students to communicate evidence-based social work knowledge through teaching, scholarship, and professional writing.

DSW Core Courses		Hours
SW 700	Adv Theories on Oppression	3
SW 701	Research for Practice I	3
SW 702	Research for Practice II	3
SW 705	Adv Advocacy Policy Practice	3
SW 706	Teaching Social Work Practice	3
SW 750	Intro to Capstone Project	1
SW 751	Capstone Prep Ind Study	2
SW 799	Capstone Project	9
Total Hours		27

Specializations

Students must complete a concentration in either Advanced Clinical Practice or Organizational Leadership.

Comprehensive Exams:

Upon completion of the first semester of the specialization coursework (2nd year), students will take comprehensive exams. The exams will cover either of the specialization focus areas (Advanced Clinical Practice OR Social Work Administration and Organizational Leadership). Exams will be offered during the fall semester.

Capstone Project

All students will be required to complete a Capstone Project in order to fulfill graduation requirements for the DSW Degree. The Capstone Project will consist of three parts: 1) a proposal, 2) proposal defense and a 3) final project defense.

The Capstone Project Proposal

Students will start the Capstone Project Proposal in the fall semester of the second year in the Introduction to the Capstone Project Course (1 credit hour). Students will complete the Capstone Proposal in the Course in the Capstone Proposal Course (2 hours) during the summer of the second year. Students must successfully defend the Capstone Proposal in order to register for Capstone Project hours.

The Capstone Project

All students will be required to complete a Capstone Project in order to fulfill graduation requirements for the DSW Degree. Students must register for at least 9 Capstone Project Credit hours. Students must successfully defend the Capstone Project in order to fulfill the D.S.W. Degree requirements.

Advanced Clinical Practice Concentration		Hours
SW 703	Neuroscience in Clinical Pract	3
SW 720	Clinical Supervision Ethics	3
SW 721	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	3
SW 722	Assess Diagn Clin Prct	3
SW 723	Complementary & Alt Therapies	3
SW 724	Social Work and Emotion Trauma	3
Credit Hours Subtotal:		18
DSW Core (see above)		27
Total Hours		45
Organizational Leadership concentration		Hours
SW 704	Org Leadership Theory Practice	3
SW 730	Lead Org Change	3
SW 731	Lead Human Serv Dev	3
SW 732	Ethics Comm Org Lead	3
SW 733	Human Serv Finance Budgeting	3
SW 734	Hum Res Mgt Health Pub Nonprof	3
Credit Hours Subtotal:		18
DSW Core (see above)		27
Total Hours		45

Transfer Credit

Requirements for Transfer Credits

Students who have completed doctoral coursework at other universities may request that a portion of their previously-earned credits be transferred towards their completion of the DSW degree at UA. Evaluation of credit for transfer will not officially be determined until the student is enrolled in the UA Graduate School and the UA School of Social Work. Acceptance of credits requires the approval of the School of Social Work and the UA Graduate School. The Graduate School has policies for transfer credits.

Requests for transfer credits will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and must conform to the guidelines established by the DSW Program Committee in addition to Graduate School requirements:

- Credits should be from another doctoral degree program (PhD, EdD, DSW).
- Coursework that does not overlap with or duplicate required courses if the DSW curriculum may generally be accepted as transfer credits for electives.
- Requests to transfer credits that would replace required DSW courses will receive more scrutiny to make sure they align appropriately with required courses.
- Since the DSW Program allows students to take up to one MSW-level course as an elective, up to 3 credits of master's level coursework will be considered as long as they are not credits earned for the MSW degree that students are required to have to be eligible for the DSW Program. It must be coursework that was taken in addition to the required master's degree.

Transfer Credit

The following process has been established for reviewing and approving transfer of credits:

- Students must initiate a request for transfer credits using the Graduate School form.
- The student must also submit the syllabus for each course transfer request directly to the DSW Program Director for review. Transfer requests without a course syllabus will not be approved.
- The Graduate School reviews the student's initial request and forwards the request to the DSW Program Director if it meets the Graduate School's requirements.
- The DSW Program Director will approve transfer credits that clearly follow the guidelines outlined above. Any request that is unclear whether it meets these guidelines will be reviewed by the DSW Program Committee.
- Transfer credits that meet the DSW Program guidelines for replacing elective courses will be approved by the DSW Program Director, with consultation of the DSW Program Committee, as needed. Requests for transfer credits that would replace required courses for the program will be reviewed and approved by the DSW Program Committee.
- The DSW Program Director or DSW program assistant will initiate the final approval form.

Students are cautioned that the DSW Program curriculum is designed so that the work completed in its courses contribute to their Comprehensive Paper and Capstone Project. Therefore, transferring credits to replace DSW courses could possibly delay student progress on those requirements. Students are strongly recommended to discuss transferring credits with their advisor and/or the DSW Program Director.

Comprehensive Paper Requirement

To move forward to working on the Capstone Project, you are required to successfully complete a Comprehensive Paper assignment. There are a number of purposes that the Comprehensive Paper serves:

1. It allows you to demonstrate the advanced social work knowledge and research/evaluation methods learned in your coursework and residencies.
2. It allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired the skills and knowledge needed to complete your Capstone Project.
3. Its format serves as the design for the final Capstone Project.

There are three options for the Comprehensive Paper. You must select one. You should select the option that best fits in with your educational, capstone, and career goals. Full descriptions of the three Comprehensive Paper options can be found in the DSW Program Handbook.

To prepare for their Comprehensive Paper, students must identify a Chair for their Capstone Project Committee before the end of spring semester during their second year. Ideally, students will identify a second member of their committee at the same time, though students may require more time to identify the second member during the summer of their second year. This is the committee that will review and approve students' Comprehensive Papers and Capstone Projects.

You should strive to have your Comprehensive Paper approved by the end of the summer semester of your second year so you can start their Capstone Project at the beginning of your third year. However, you can submit your paper for review and approval at any time before this point if you feel that your Comprehensive Paper is ready for review. If more time is needed, you can submit your paper after your second summer, though this may delay the start of your Capstone project.

You may have to submit several drafts of the Comprehensive Paper, have multiple meetings with committee members, receive feedback from the committee, and incorporate requested edits to the paper before it is deemed successfully approved. When the members are prepared to approve the Comprehensive Paper, the student should meet with the committee for additional feedback and support in moving forward. You should submit drafts first to your chair before submitting them to the second member of your committee for review.

Comprehensive paper approval requires the signature of both members of their committee. Once a student receives approval, the advisor will contact the DSW Program Director, who will have the Comprehensive Paper Approval Form circulated for signatures. Ideally, students will have their paper approved by the end of summer semester their second year, though the timeline for students to successfully pass their Comprehensive Papers will vary from student to student. Some students may successfully complete their papers before the summer of their second year and it is also common for students to require additional time to successfully pass their Comprehensive Paper.

Capstone Project

You are required to complete a final Capstone Project in order to fulfill all of the requirements for obtaining the DSW Program at the University of Alabama. This Capstone Project may be initiated during the third year of the program and will require you to demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills (depending on the scope of the project) in evidence-based social work practice, theory, and research/evaluation.

The topics and scope of Capstone Projects will vary, due to the varying social work practice settings where DSW students currently

practice within. In general, the Capstone Project is not designed to be a dissertation

You are encouraged early in your DSW studies to discuss your ideas for the Capstone Project with faculty and the DSW Program Director. Also, you should consider how your individual course assignments may focus on topics that can inform or contribute to your Capstone Project.

You have three options for the Capstone Project and must choose one. Full descriptions of the three Capstone Project options can be found in the DSW Program Handbook. Note that none of these options should be compared to a PhD dissertation, where the primary goals and assessment for these projects focus on advanced research methodologies. While DSW students must learn and demonstrate an understanding of research and evaluation methods, the Capstone Project reflects an intersection between advanced practice skills and research methodologies.

At the conclusion of their Capstone Project, you will have to submit a final written report and complete either an on-campus or virtual defense presentation of your project. You must use the DSW Capstone Project Report Template for final approval. All virtual presentations must comply with University Graduate School policy.

Capstone Project approval requires the signature of both members of the Capstone Project committee. Approval may be obtained after you successfully complete the defense presentation. Once you receive approval, your advisor will contact the DSW Program Director, who will have the Capstone Approval Form circulated for signatures. Students who choose to publish a peer-reviewed article for their Capstone Project must also have the Capstone Project Authorship Contribution Form. Final versions of the Capstone Project Report must be submitted to the DSW Program Director before the Graduate School deadline for graduation in any given semester. These deadlines can be found here: <https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/student-deadlines/>

Ideally, students will have their final Capstone Project Report approved by the end of summer semester their third year, though the timeline for students to successfully pass their Capstone Project will vary from student to student. Some students may successfully complete their papers before the summer of their third year and it is also common for students to require additional time to successfully pass their final Capstone Project.

Capstone Committee Formation

The purpose of the Capstone Project Committee is to guide the student through the Comprehensive Paper and Capstone Project requirements. Students may select members of their Capstone Committee based on the individuals' social work area of expertise, expertise in research and evaluation methodologies, or some other skill/expertise that will be helpful for the student in developing, implementing, and writing the report for their projects. School of Social Work faculty have a wide range of areas of expertise, including: children's services, health and human service management, aging, policy, rural populations, school social work, criminal/juvenile justice, social work and health care, and behavioral health. Second committee members may not necessarily be a social worker or have obtained a doctorate degree if their area of expertise is relevant to the student's work.

Upon entering the DSW Program, students are assigned an academic advisor to help them plan course work. In their first year, the student's initial advisor will be the DSW Program Director until another advisor is identified. If the student finds that another faculty member may be doing work more related to their area of practice, advisor assignments

may change. Usually, though not always, this advisor will become the student's Capstone Project Advisor or second committee member. When the student begins work on the Capstone Project proposal, the advisor will take primary responsibility, along with the second committee member, for further technical and professional assistance and guidance. The same faculty member may serve as advisor and committee member throughout the DSW Program Committee doctoral program of study.

All members of Capstone Project Committees must be members of the Graduate Faculty. Those who serve as Committee Chairs must be full-time faculty within the School of Social Work who have full/associate member Graduate Faculty status and be appointed at the rank of Assistant Professor or higher. Instructors within the school of social work, as well as faculty and practitioners outside of the School of Social Work and University of Alabama are also eligible to serve on Capstone Committees. In such cases, the DSW Program Director must submit a request that they be accepted as members to the University Graduate Faculty. To do so, the student must send the Director a copy of the individual's CV and a statement on why their expertise will be supportive in the Capstone Project process. Students should consult with their Chair before selecting an external second member. Students should also evaluate whether an external committee member may pose a conflict of interest for them.

The DSW Program Director or DSW Program Assistant will circulate the Capstone Committee form via DocuSign.

Admission to Candidacy Requirements

Students who successfully pass their Comprehensive Paper and have completed and/or are registered for all of their required non-Capstone Project coursework may advance to candidacy. The DSW Program Director or DSW Program Assistant will initiate this form, which will be submitted to the UA Graduate School.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

Please refer to the Graduate School Policy.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

Please refer to the Graduate School Policy.

Student Progress Requirement

There may be cases where a student is dismissed from the program for reasons that include: (a) Failure to meet academic standards set by the Graduate School (Please see below); (b) Failure to meet professional preparedness standards, as determined by the School of Social Work; or (c) Academic misconduct.

Additional Academic Requirement

Summer Residencies

Due to the fact that the DSW program is primarily a distance program, there is not residency requirement for enrolled students to complete their coursework. However, during the summers in years 1 and 2, DSW students must attend on-campus residency programs. These residencies will last 4 days in year 1 and 5 days in year 2. The residencies will take place during the first 2 weeks of June each summer.

During residencies, students will travel to campus and attend workshops and trainings each day. The workshops will supplement the content learned in courses and also include opportunities to meet with faculty in-

person for feedback on coursework and/or support in advancing through the DSW program.

Attendance for On-campus and Synchronous Activities

DSW students enrolled in the program **must** make arrangements to participate in the on-campus activities that are planned as part of the program, such as the on-campus orientation and annual residency retreats. Students **must** also participate in all synchronous activities required from their classes. Failure to do so may result in termination from the program. Excused absences for on-campus requirements will only be granted in extreme circumstances. Such cases include:

- Significant medical condition experienced by the student and/or immediate family member.
- Death of an immediate family member.
- Required military service.
- Unexpected travel delays or cancellations when using public transit (Planes, trains, and bus).

Note that documentation will be required for an excused absence. In some cases, students may be asked to make-up assignments that was missed during the on-campus content.

Requirement for Continuing Social Work Practice

Students are expected to be actively practicing social work throughout their time in the DSW Program, either through paid employment or volunteer work. The practice setting for students is not provided by the School of Social Work Field Office and students are expected to meet this requirement on their own.

Academic Misconduct Information

Please refer to the Graduate School policy.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Please refer to the Graduate School policy.

Academic Grievance Information

Students who have concerns about issues that are having a negative impact on student learning or barrier to student achievement may report these concerns to the DSW Program Director. The DSW Program director will consult with the Associate Dean for Student Services for consensus in how to address the issue.

When reported concerns regard quality of instruction, the DSW Program Director will:

- consider the number of students being impacted and the context of the issue (e.g., Title IX complaint, quality of course content) when formulating a response;
- encourage students to discuss the issue with the instructor directly, if deemed appropriate for students to do so;
- follow-up with the instructor to discuss the course;
- discuss the matter with School of Social Work and university departments, as deemed appropriate; and
- follow-up with the student(s) afterwards to see if the issue has been resolved.

Students who do not believe that the issue has been resolved may file a subsequent grievance with School of Social Work Grievance Committees or university offices, as deemed appropriate.

Students should be aware that full-time university faculty typically instruct their courses under the shared assumption of academic freedom.

As a result, there are significant limits on instructional changes that the administration can require a faculty member to make at the request of administration. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged that students document issues they report in writing and also emphasize feedback in the Student Opinions of Instruction (SOIs). Student feedback and SOI reports will be reviewed by the DSW Program Director as well as the Associate Dean for Student Services and Dean of the School of Social Work (when appropriate) to determine if issues reported should be used in future decisions about DSW course instruction. Students should understand that a number of factors are considered in making course instruction decisions and students' complaints are only one of these factors. Students should also understand that complaints about individual course instructors will not be discussed or handled by the DSW Program Committee.

Please refer to the Graduate School information.

Grades and Academic Standing

Please refer to the Graduate School policy.

Graduate School Deadlines Information

Please refer to the Graduate School information.

Application for Graduation Information

Please refer to the Graduate School policy.