
Information and Instructions for Master of Social Work Program Application

The University of Northern Iowa Master of Social Work (MSW) Program offers both on-campus and distance education options. Both UNI's undergraduate and graduate social work programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Our Advanced Standing programs are for those students with a bachelor's degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program whereas the Foundation program is for students who do not have a bachelor's degree in social work.

Three program tracks are currently available:

- ✓ Advanced Standing (on-campus; June start; full-time for 3 semesters)
- ✓ Advanced Standing (distance education; June start; full-time for 3 semesters)
- ✓ Foundation (hybrid; fall start; full-time for 5 semesters)

We are also accepting extended-enrollment (part-time) applications for these programs. Extended enrollment students must be able to attend classes at the times offered (3 hr. blocks) and be available for the field practicum. Most practicums take place at agencies that operate during regular business hours (9 am to 5 pm). Extended enrolled students must complete all requirements within seven years.

The Department of Social Work is committed to the selection of applicants who demonstrate strong potential to successfully undertake graduate studies in Social Work, who indicate commitment to the profession, and who have a liberal arts background.

Minimum Requirements for Admission:

- ✓ A bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university (or equivalent degree from another country as determined by the Office of Admissions)
- ✓ A minimum undergraduate GPA of (exceptions are considered based on other factors):
 - 3.00 on a 4.00 scale for both Foundation and Advanced Standing
 - The foreign equivalent as determined by the Office of Admissions.
 - At the request of the applicant, the Graduate Admissions Committee may consider the student's GPA for the final 60 semester hours from the degree school.
 - Six semester hours or more of letter-graded graduate work may be used to replace the undergraduate GPA. Graduate level courses may be completed in the following areas: social work, psychology, sociology, family studies, political

science, economics, and other areas that are related to the profession of social work. For graduate level courses to be considered, a minimum grade of B (3.00 on a 4.00 scale) is required for each course and an overall grade point average of at least 3.25 must be achieved.

- ✓ Applicants must demonstrate competence in the use of basic statistical methods by the completion of a statistics course from an accredited institution with a minimum grade of C. While not recommended, this requirement may be met after admission. Students who have not already completed a statistics course will be accepted under provisional acceptance status but the requirement must be met within the student's first semester.

The University does not discriminate in access to, or treatment or employment in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, veteran status, or disability.

The Department of Social Work Graduate Admissions Committee reserves the right to deny an applicant's admission to the graduate program based upon factors related to potential to become an effective social worker and make positive contributions to the field.

Application Procedures Checklist:

The following components are required as part of the application process for admission to the program.

- Application for Graduate Study at the University of Northern Iowa (apply online on the [Admissions webpage](#))
- Résumé including education & work/volunteer/internship/field experience. To include all experience, it may be necessary for your résumé to exceed one page in length.
- Personal Statement (see detailed description below)
- Supporting GPA Appeal Statement (Required for those with a GPA below 3.00 Required applications not including this statement will not be reviewed.)
- Two References (See detailed description below. References will be sent an electronic link via email during the online application process)
- The University Application Fee of \$60.00 for domestic applicants (\$75 for international applicants), unless the applicant received an undergraduate degree from the University of Northern Iowa.
- Submission of official academic transcripts from all colleges and universities attended except from the University of Northern Iowa.
 - The official transcripts are to be sent by the college or university directly to: University of Northern Iowa, Office of Admissions, Gilchrist 002, Cedar Falls, IA 50614- 0018.
 - Applicants will not be considered if the Office of Admissions has not received an official copy by the deadline for applications.
 - We advise you to allow at least one-month lead time for requesting transcripts.
- (Full-time applicants only; Optional) Application for Graduate Tuition Scholarship

and Application for Graduate Assistantship Stipend. Graduate Tuition Scholarships and Graduate Assistantships require full-time student status.

Completion of the General Test of Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is optional. However, the GRE general test scores including the analytic writing score may be submitted in support of applications. If the GRE scores are to be considered by the Graduate Admissions Committee, the test should be taken as early as possible to ensure receipt of the test results by the Department of Social Work before the application deadline. Information on the GRE may be obtained from the Educational Testing Service, Box 955, Princeton, NJ 08541 or call 800/GRE-CALL. The GRE test scores are to be sent directly by the Educational Testing Service to the UNI Office of Admissions.

Personal Statement Details & Instructions:

Social work is a profession guided by the **National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics**, which includes clearly defined principles around social justice, treating all people with dignity and worth, valuing the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Social work requires professional practice within the Code of Ethics and as such, our students are held to the same ethical and professional behavioral standards. Violations of ethical or professional behavior standards may result in dismissal from the program. Additionally, social work practice and therefore, social work education require the discussion of and work around a number of sensitive topics, including acts of physical/emotional/sexual/mental/systemic abuse, violence, discrimination, and oppression. Applicants need to be aware that such sensitive topics will be a regular part of coursework.

Critical thinking skills and effective communication are necessary tools for effective social work practice. To help the Graduate Admissions Committee assess your skills and abilities, applicants are required to submit a writing sample in the form of a personal statement. In no more than three, double-spaced pages, please label your responses to the following questions:

1. Why do you want to be a social worker and what impact does obtaining an MSW have on your goals? Feel free to highlight any experiences you have had that are relevant to the social work field (including work, field/internships, volunteer, and/or life experiences).
2. Describe a time (past or present), where you advocated, demonstrated leadership, or spoken up for something you believe in strongly.
3. What impact do you want to have on the people you work with?
4. What do you foresee as your biggest challenge(s) in completing this program/meeting the expectations of the program?
5. Supporting GPA Appeal Statement (required only if your GPA is below the required minimum): Include a one-page statement titled "GPA Appeal Statement" at the end of your Personal Statement (this does not count against page limit). Discuss the following:
 - a. Contributing factors to your undergraduate GPA.
 - b. How you have otherwise demonstrated a capacity for success in a rigorous

graduate program (superior grades during the final semester(s) of work prior to graduation, success in another degree or certificate program, etc.)?

- c. If granted admission to the program, how do you plan to address potential obstacles to successfully completing the program?

Personal Statement Formatting Requirements:

- ✓ Maximum three pages (not including GPA Appeal Statement, if required)
- ✓ Double-spaced with 1" margins
- ✓ Label each response, using either the question number or the question itself.
- ✓ The use of generative AI is prohibited in crafting your personal statement. The UNI Department of Social Work has a standard prohibiting the use of generative AI in social work courses, unless directed by the instructor. The admissions committee will contact an applicant if there is a concern that their statement includes the use of generative AI and retains the right to not accept such a statement.

Guidance for References

Two references speaking to the applicant's academic strengths, professionalism, and potential for graduate social work education are required for your application.

- ✓ Applicants will submit the reference's email address within the online application. References will be automatically sent a link to complete the reference.
- ✓ References only need to complete the reference rating form. They **do not** need to submit an additional letter.
- ✓ All references should be from instructors, professionals, employers, supervisors, and/or people in professional positions.
- ✓ References from high school teachers/staff, personal friends, personal therapists, or relatives will result in the application being automatically denied.
- ✓ One reference must be from a college-level instructor and address the applicant's ability to do graduate level academic work.
- ✓ One reference must be a professional reference.
- ✓ Any questions or concerns about obtaining the required references should be addressed to the MSW Program Director.

Tuition Scholarship and Graduate Assistantship Position (Full-time Students Only):

If you are applying for our full-time programs and wish to be considered for a tuition scholarship and/or a graduate assistantship, please be sure to complete the Application for Graduate Tuition Scholarship and/or Application for Graduate Assistantship Stipend forms and return with your application materials. These applications are located **online**.

- ✓ Per Graduate College rules, Graduate Assistantship work must be completed on campus.
- ✓ Please note that per Graduate College policies, students who are admitted on provisional status cannot be considered for Tuition Scholarships or Graduate Assistantships.

Application Deadline:

For full consideration, all admission materials must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. on the required application deadline date posted on the UNI MSW program's website.

Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all application materials are submitted by the application deadline, including transcripts and letters of recommendation.

Applications that are not complete by the full consideration deadline or new applications submitted after the full consideration deadline will be reviewed only if additional openings remain in the cohort.

Evaluation and Admission Process:

The UNI MSW program employs a two-stage admissions evaluation process. For the first evaluation stage, the Graduate Admissions Committee will evaluate candidates in a comprehensive manner and consider the following elements:

- ✓ GPA (application weight: 40%)
- ✓ Related work/volunteer/practicum experience (application weight: 20%)
- ✓ Personal Statement (application weight: 40%)
- ✓ Two References speaking to the applicant's academic strengths, professionalism, and potential for graduate social work education are required for your application.

Group Interviews:

Based on the aforementioned factors, the Graduate Admissions Committee will invite selected applicants for a group interview for the second evaluation stage. Interviews will be held via Zoom for all applicants. Faculty will conduct group interviews to assess applicants' level of interest, motivation, and compatibility with the program.

Decision Timeline:

The committee will inform candidates of the program's decision within eight weeks of the application deadline. The potential outcomes are:

- ✓ Full admission
- ✓ Provisional admission
 - Statistics Requirement Unmet: Provisional status will be removed upon completion of an approved statistics course. This requirement must be met within the student's first semester at UNI. Applicants are highly encouraged to complete an introductory statistics course as soon as possible. Final transcripts demonstrating the student received a final grade of C or better must be sent to UNI.
 - Academic concerns due to low undergraduate GPA: Student will be required to

achieve a grade point average of 3.00 in the first semester of graduate course work after which provisional status will be removed.

- ✓ Placement on a ranked waitlist
- ✓ Admission denial

If accepted to the program, it is important that the applicant reply by the deadline date listed in the letter; otherwise, the offer may be passed to an applicant on the waitlist. The ranked waitlist will be maintained in the event of withdrawals until the first day of classes in each program.

As applications are considered on a cohort basis, applicants placed on the ranked waitlist who are not admitted before the start of classes or applicants who are denied admission would need to reapply for acceptance consideration to a future cohort.