

Department of Social Work MSW Program Application Instructions

UNI's Master of Social Work (MSW) Program offers both on-campus and distance education options. 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 (BSW) from a CSWE accredited program whereas the **Foundation** program is for students without a BSW degree.

Available Program Tracks

- ✓ **Advanced Standing on Campus** - face-to-face, summer start, full-time for 3 semesters.
- ✓ **Advanced Standing Distance Ed** - on-line, summer start, full-time for 3 semesters.
- ✓ **Foundation Hybrid** - on-line, one day on campus, fall start, full-time for 5 semesters.¹

*Advanced standing applicants apply to only one track
but automatically considered for both tracks as space permits.*

Minimum Requirements for Admission

- ✓ **Bachelor's degree** from accredited college or university (or equivalent from another country as determined by the Office of Admissions)
 - ✓ **Minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.00** (4.00 scale or foreign equivalent), if you have less than a 3.0 GPA:
 - Write a GPA Appeal Statement (required, see guidelines below);
 - Include last 60 credit-hours GPA from undergraduate work;
 - Optional, substitute your undergrad GPA with 6 credit-hours or more of completed graduate course work from social work, psychology, sociology, family studies, political science, or economics. You must earn a grade of B (3.00 on a 4.00 scale) or better per course with an overall graduate GPA of 3.25 or better.
 - ✓ **Completion of a college-credit statistical methods course** with a grade of C or better.
- Students lacking statistics can be provisionally admitted but must complete a stats course in the first year in the MSW program.

UNI 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.

¹ **Foundation** students attend one full day of on-campus course and program activities each month, required and scheduled well in advance.

Application Checklist

Complete applications include:

- **Application for graduate study**, apply online at <https://csbs.uni.edu/msw>
- **Professional résumé** to include your education & work/volunteer/internship/field experiences, relevant accomplishments, may exceed one page in length, see [UNI's Career Service](#) or your own institution's career services for help.
- **Personal statement**, see guidelines below.
- **GPA appeal statement**, only for those with less than a 3.0 GPA.
- **Two references**, see guidelines below.
- **UNI application fee**, \$60.00 for domestic applicants, \$75 for international applicants, waived for UNI students & alumni.
- **Official transcripts** from all colleges/universities attended sent directly to:
University of Northern Iowa, Office of Admissions, Gilchrist 002, Cedar Falls, IA 50614.
Transcripts must be received on or before the deadline, allow at least one-month lead time. UNI transcripts are not required.
- **OPTIONAL Applications for graduate tuition scholarship and/or assistantship stipend**, it's worth investigating at the [Division of Graduate Studies / Funding](#) website.

General Test of Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is not required.

Personal Statement Instructions

In two pages or less, single-space, 12-point font, label your responses to the following:

1. Why do you want to become a social worker, and how will an MSW help you achieve your goals? Include relevant work, internship, volunteer, or life experiences.
2. Describe a time you advocated for something you strongly believe in or demonstrated leadership.
3. What impact do you hope to have on the people you serve?
4. What challenges do you anticipate in completing the MSW program, and how will you address them?

Applicants with less than a 3.0 GPA provide a half-page **GPA Appeal Statement**, added at the end of the personal statement, does not count against page limit, discussing:

1. What affected your undergraduate GPA?
2. What shows you can succeed in graduate school?
3. How will you overcome challenges in the program?

The use of generative AI is prohibited in crafting your personal statement and may result in rejection of application.

Guidance for References

Select two references that can assess your academic strengths, professionalism, and potential for graduate social work education.

- Submit the reference's **name and email address** within the online application, they automatically receive an online assessment form.
- References only complete the reference rating form, no additional letter.
- 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**, e.g. supervisor from paid or social work-related volunteer un-paid work.
- References can NOT be high school teachers/staff, personal friends, personal therapists, or relatives.

Please direct any questions or concerns about the references or application to:

Dr. Vaughn DeCoster, LISW
vaughn.decoster@uni.edu

Application Deadline

Deadlines for all program options:

*Early consideration – applications due **Nov. 1.***
*Standard consideration – applications due **Jan. 1.***

Admission materials must be received by midnight on these respective dates. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all materials are submitted by the deadline, including transcripts and references. Applications completed after the final deadline are reviewed if cohort space becomes available.

We admit roughly 25 students per cohort for each program track.

Evaluation & Admission Process

The UNI MSW Graduate Admissions Committee carefully evaluates candidates considering the following elements:

- GPA – 30% application weight
- Related work/volunteer/practicum experience – 20% application weight
- Personal Statement – 30% application weight
- References – 20% application weight

Decision Timeline

Early consideration applicant decisions will be completed by **mid-December** with applicants notified shortly thereafter via e-mail. **Standard consideration** applicant decisions will be completed by **mid-February** with applicants notified shortly thereafter via e-mail.

Application Outcomes

- **Full admission**
- **Provisional admission**
 - Statistics Requirement Unmet: Provisional status will be removed upon completion of an approved statistics course, requirement must be met within the first year, earning a final grade of C.
 - 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.
- **Waitlisted**, full admission pending available space.
- **Admission denied**

If granted admission, you must accept or decline the **offer of admission** by the deadline listed in the letter; otherwise, the offer will be passed to another applicant. The ranked waitlist will be maintained in the event of withdrawals until the first day of classes in each program.

Applicants waitlisted and not admitted before the start of classes or applicants denied admission must reapply during the next admission cycle.

Mandatory Orientation

New MSW Student Online Orientation: **March 3, 2027, from 1–3 p.m. via Zoom.** Attendance is required to maintain admission status.