

Frequently Asked Questions about the Doctoral Program

Q: What is the difference between the Master's in Social Work (MSW) program at Columbia and the doctoral (Ph.D.) program?

A: The MSW program is the entry-level graduate degree for those students who plan to become practitioners providing direct social work services to client populations, performing agency-based administrative, advocacy or policy functions. The majority of our MSW graduates go on to provide their services in an agency-based setting. By contrast, the doctoral program is primarily designed to train researchers and scholars in social work and social welfare who will contribute to knowledge development advancing work of the profession and its practitioners.

Q: What types of careers do your program's graduates pursue?

A: The majority of the doctoral program's graduates accept positions conducting research and/or teaching in universities and research institutions throughout the world. Other graduates choose to join governmental organizations or think tanks that conduct relevant social policy research and analysis. A few opt to re-enter the social services field in an executive capacity. All said, the current job market for the social work student with a doctorate is excellent -- there are diverse opportunities and many of them.

Q: What are the basic requirements for entering the doctoral program?

Applicants to the CUSSW Doctoral Program must meet the following requirements:

- ❖ Attainment of a Masters degree in social work or, in exceptional circumstances, a related discipline.
- ❖ Excellent undergraduate and graduate academic records.
- ❖ Demonstrated competence to undertake independent research.
- ❖ Satisfactory scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).
- ❖ For those applying to the Advanced Practice method, a minimum of two years of post-Masters direct practice experience is strongly preferred.

Further admissions information and downloadable admissions materials may be found at:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/phdprogram/admissions/index.html>

Q: Do you accept part-time students? What about students wishing to take courses on a non-matriculated basis?

A: Unfortunately, we do not accept part-time students. The doctoral program's graduation requirements are both demanding and time-consuming, requiring students to devote nearly two years full-time to the program's coursework alone, followed by work on the dissertation. There are two courses that students may take on a non-matriculated basis -- a course on the history and philosophy of social welfare, and an introductory research methods course. Please contact the doctoral program if you would be interested in receiving a non-matriculated student application. Applicants should be aware that admission on a non-matriculated basis is no guarantee of admission to the full-time program, which has a rigorous and competitive admissions process all of its own. There is no financial aid available to non-matriculated students.

Q: What materials must be submitted as part of the application?

A: All of the following:

- ❖ A completed general application form (online or paper)
- ❖ A personal statement
- ❖ Three letters of recommendation (at least two of which must be written by persons who are well-acquainted with your academic work)
- ❖ Transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate schools you have attended
- ❖ GRE scores (*sent via ETS to Institutional Code 2158, Departmental Code 5001*)
- ❖ TOEFL scores for international students whose native language is not English.
- ❖ TSE scores (The Test of Spoken English) for international students whose native language is not English are strongly recommended.
- ❖ Writing sample of no more than 25 pages (optional)

Q: How can I tell if I have to take the TOEFL or TSE?

A: All international students whose native language is not English must take the TOEFL exam, with the exception of students who earned their Master's degree at an institution in an English-speaking country. The TSE examine is also strongly recommended. If you are uncertain of whether or not you need to take these tests, please contact us.

Q: What are your minimum required scores on the GRE?

A: The doctoral program does not employ a minimum "cut-off" score on the GRE. Instead, our admissions committee uses the GRE as one useful tool among many to evaluate each applicant. A student's personal statement, references, and academic transcripts are also crucial determining a candidate's potential for admission. However, it goes without saying that a strong score does strengthen your application.

Q: Where should I have my GRE scores sent?

A: You should request that ETS send your GRE scores to the Columbia University School of Social Work (Institutional Code **2158**, Departmental Code **5001**). Please note that your scores should *not* be sent to the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences as they do not review applications for the School of Social Work.

Q: I have taken high-level graduate courses in social work (or a related discipline) from another school. Is there a possibility that I can transfer these credits toward the Columbia program?

A: Because of the specialized nature of our curriculum, we only waive introductory level statistics and research courses. To waive a class, you must submit a syllabus from the equivalent class you have taken and discuss the waiving with the Columbia professor teaching the course. There are other scenarios in which certain courses might be waived, but this is dependent on your particular academic background and experience. To find out if you might qualify for additional transfer credits, please contact the doctoral program for more information.

Q: When is the application due?

A: All admissions materials (including test scores, transcripts and recommendations) must be postmarked by **January 2**. Late applications will not be accepted. Early submissions are encouraged. Our online application generally goes live in September of each year.

Q: Do you offer rolling admissions?

A: The doctoral program does not offer rolling admissions. All admissions materials must be postmarked by **January 2** in order to be eligible for review.

Q: How much does it cost to apply?

A: Paper-based applications require a fee of \$225. Online applications require a fee of \$65. For more information on the online application, see:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/phdprogram/admissions/apply.html>

Q: How can I be sure that all my application materials have been received?

A: We thoroughly account for all the admissions materials that arrive for each applicant. If something from your application is missing, we will either call or e-mail you in order to let you know what we need. You will receive one notification of missing materials, after which point you will be wholly responsible for following up on missing items.

Q: Is it possible to send in my application materials in several installments?

A: Applicants should be aware of the fact that we will not process incomplete applications. Until all of the above-mentioned components of the application are received, your application will not move on to the admissions committee. We suggest that you send all the materials you can in one mailing, so that the time it takes to process your application is significantly lessened. Remember that you will have to rely upon outside sources for portions of your application. Therefore, we strongly advise that you take the GRE and ask for your recommendations well in advance of applying to the program.

Q: When should I expect to hear about my admissions decision?

A: You should expect to hear from us sometime in March or early April. The specific date varies from year to year because the number of applicants differs. Be assured, however, that we will inform you of your decision in as timely a manner as possible.

Q: What financial aid is available to students?

A: The Doctoral Program offers competitive funding packages to accepted students requesting financial aid. The funding packages available from the doctoral program can include tuition remission as well as graduate research assistantships and teaching assistantships. In addition, students may be eligible for a variety of grants, and scholarships. Applicants to the program should be advised that there is no formal financial aid form to complete, but that they should indicate on their applications that they wish to be considered for financial aid from the doctoral program. Additional information on nationally competitive grants and other possible sources of aid may be found on the following page:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/phdprogram/financial/sources.html>.

Q: How hard is it to get in to the program?

A: Each year, we attract a very strong pool of applicants with diverse talents and research interests. Unfortunately, the number of quality applicants invariably exceeds the number of available spots that we have in the incoming cohort, and our applicant pool has become increasingly competitive over the last several years. Although each year's applicant pool is unique, we continually work to recruit the most academically promising, diverse and well-rounded cohort possible. We encourage you to apply and wish you the best as you contemplate your decisions regarding your doctoral education.

Q: Where should I direct my other questions about the doctoral program?

A: If you still have any questions, feel free to contact the doctoral office. We'll be glad to help.

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