



Worden School of Social Service

# Ph.D. PROGRAM HANDBOOK

---

---

# PREFACE

The Ph.D. Program Handbook is designed to provide important program information to Ph.D. students in Worden School of Social Service. It is not intended to be a complete statement of all School and University policies. In addition, note that the policies and procedures described in the Handbook are subject to change at the discretion of the Ph.D. Committee. They are not to be considered or otherwise relied upon as a complete statement of the legal terms and conditions of student enrollment and status. Instead, this Handbook has been designed to provide, in summary form, important information regarding the Ph.D. program at the Worden School of Social Service.

Students must also consult the [Student Affairs](#) and [Graduate Student](#) SharePoint sites. All university policies and procedures are available in [ConvergentPoint](#). Doctoral student can also visit the [graduate catalog](#) for course sequence in the Ph.D. program. Students are responsible to comply with those graduate policies, forms, and procedures. If there is a conflict between this Handbook and the policies of Academic Affairs, the Academic Affairs policy takes precedence. Although this Handbook aims to give accurate and complete information as possible from year to year, changes to policy and program requirements do occur so students should check with their advisor, their dissertation chair, and the Ph.D. Program Director on matters of which they are unsure. When a new Ph.D. Handbook is issued that has significant changes, the Ph.D. Program Director should provide the new Ph.D. Handbook with information about the changes to all currently enrolled doctoral students.

---

# GENERAL INFORMATION

**Address:** Our Lady of the Lake University  
Worden School of Social Service  
411 SW 24<sup>th</sup> Street  
San Antonio, TX 78207

**Director, Worden School of Social Service** Karina Gil, Ph.D., MSW  
Associate Professor  
(210) 528-7062  
[kegil@ollusa.edu](mailto:kegil@ollusa.edu)

**Interim Ph.D. Program Director** Alegnta Felleke, Ph.D., MSW  
Assistant Professor  
(210) 431-3911  
[afshibikom@ollusa.edu](mailto:afshibikom@ollusa.edu)

**Ph.D. Administrative Assistant** Anna Marie Ramirez  
Ph.D. Administrative Assistant  
(210) 528-7102  
[amramirez@ollusa.edu](mailto:amramirez@ollusa.edu)

**The Ph.D. Committee Members (2021-2022)** Karina Gil, Ph.D., MSW  
Joy Patton, Ph.D., LMSW  
Alegnta Felleke, Ph.D., MSW  
Mo Cuevas, Ph.D., LCSW  
Ilan Kwon, Ph.D. MSW

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Ph.D. Program Director	5
About OLLU	7
About Worden	8
Program Description	9
Admission Requirements	10
Course Requirements	11
Student Responsibilities	12
Academic Policies	14
The Qualifying Exam	18
The Qualifying Exam Committee	18
Written Qualifying Exam Procedures	18
Oral Qualifying Exam Procedures	19
The Comprehensive Exam	20
The Comprehensive Examination Proposal	20
The Oral Comprehensive Exam	21
Dissertation Requirements	22
Selecting the Dissertation Committee	22
Responsibilities of the Chair	23
Responsibilities of the Committee Members	23
Responsibilities of the Doctoral Student	24
The Dissertation Proposal	24
Evaluating the Dissertation Proposal	27
Conducting Research and Writing Dissertation	29
The Dissertation Defense	30
Resources	31
Appendix	33
Appendix A: Ph.D. Student Core Competencies	34
Appendix B: Teaching Assistantship Intent Disclosure Form	37
Appendix C: Dissertation Committee Declaration Form	38
Appendix D: Dissertation Proposal Approval Form	39
Appendix E: The Dissertation Proposal Checklist	41
Appendix F: Dissertation Defense Outcome Form	43
Appendix G: Request for Exemption from Academic Requirements	45

---

## MESSAGE FROM THE Ph.D. PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Ph.D. Program of the Worden School of Social Service at Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU). This Handbook is written to provide guidance to our doctoral students at all phases in the program. It outlines how the doctoral program works from admission through dissertation defense. It offers answers to many of the questions that arise as students' progress through their doctoral education.

We are pleased that you have chosen the doctoral program in the Worden School at OLLU over the many other social work Ph.D. programs in the country. You can expect to be intellectually challenged at every step in your educational journey, and your thinking, writing, and research skills will improve as a result. With your Ph.D. in Social Work, you will be primed to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession and to educate future social workers.

The faculty and staff teaching and working with students enrolled in the Worden School Ph.D. Program are committed to your success. There are numerous supports in place to assist you as you earn your degree, from faculty who invest extra time to work with and mentor students, to peer mentors, to the Writing Center staff. As you make your way through your education, please do not hesitate to ask for help from administrators, staff, and other students.

To be successful in the Ph.D. program, students should:

- Get to know as many faculty, staff and doctoral students as you can.
- Foster relationships with fellow students that are collegial, respectful, and mutually supportive.
- Doctoral work should be your primary professional commitment throughout your time in the program.
- Get caught up in the excitement of learning and in the process of developing and attaining new knowledge and new perspectives.
- Keep in touch with the program director. Aside from your official enrollment advising session each semester, let the program director know what you are doing, where your interests lie, and your future goals and aspirations.
- Become familiar with all the requirements, policies, and petition procedures in this Handbook and the university catalogue and check back regularly for updates.
- Rely on your academic advisor to discuss your learning, any problems you may be having, and your plans and vision for your scholarly goals.
- Tap opportunities for mentoring from instructors, advisers, qualifying and dissertation committee members, supervisors of assistantships and other faculty.
- Embrace the bumps in the road as you traverse the program; if you stumble, go easy on yourself and ask for help.
- Remember you are an adult learner.
- Remember why you are pursuing doctoral education: sometimes it is worthwhile to revisit what brought you here and why.
- Strive to maintain a healthy work-family balance.

Thanks to considerable faculty support and to our students' own ingenuity, you'll discover that our doctoral students are productive, publishing in peer reviewed journals and presenting their research

and conceptual ideas at national conferences, including at our premier academic (e.g., Council for Social Work Education) and research (Society for Social Work and Research) forums.

Most of our doctoral students spend some time working as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) during their tenure at OLLU, and some work as graduate research assistants (GRAs). By the time our students graduate, they accumulate impressive resumes, making them highly competitive in the job market. While most of our graduates assume academic and/or research positions, some aspire leadership positions in public, non-profit, or for-profit agencies.

We hope that you find this Handbook helpful, and that your time spent with us in the Worden School at OLLU is challenging, inspiring, and rewarding.

---

# ABOUT OLLU

Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) was founded by the sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP); a religious order founded in the 18th century in Lorraine, France. Members of the CDP arrived in Texas in 1866 and established themselves in Austin. In 1868, the CDP's established themselves in Castroville. The order continues as the sponsoring organization of the University. By 1895 educational programs were started at the current site of the main campus of Our Lady of the Lake University. The first college program began in 1911 as a two-year curriculum for women. In 1919 the curriculum was expanded to four years, and the institution was admitted to membership in the Texas Association of Colleges.

In 1923, Our Lady of the Lake became the first San Antonio institution of higher education to receive regional accreditation; it is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 1927 it became the third Texas school to be approved by the American Association of Universities.

Graduate work, begun in 1942, was co-educational from its inception; all programs became fully co-educational in 1969. In 1975 the name of the institution was changed from Our Lady of the Lake College to Our Lady of the Lake University of San Antonio.

Living up to its mission of providing education to those with limited access, the University introduced Weekend College to San Antonio in 1978. The undergraduate Weekend College was expanded to Houston in 1986 followed by graduate and MBA programs with complete class schedules on weekends. The Dallas Weekend College was opened in 1994 and later added graduate degrees and the MBA. Today, the University's scheduling alternatives include summer sessions and daytime and evening classes at its main campus in San Antonio as well as undergraduate and graduate weekend degree programs in San Antonio, Houston, and the Rio Grande Valley. The University has articulation agreements with community colleges in San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, and El Paso. Our Lady of the Lake University currently offers bachelor's degrees in 56 areas of study, master's degrees in 21 areas of specialization, and doctorates in Counseling Psychology, Leadership Studies, and Social Work.



---

# ABOUT WORDEN

Housed in the College of Professional Studies, the Worden School of Social Service is home to Our Lady of the Lake University's social work programs. As the first school of social work in Texas, established almost 80 years ago, OLLU has set the standard for social work education and is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Degrees are offered at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.

Sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences is integral to the Worden School's mission and commitment to working with at-risk populations, with special emphasis on Hispanic children and families. At the BSW level, students can earn a biliterate (English and Spanish) certificate and/or a certificate in Violence Prevention and Intervention. At the MSW level, students acquire skills and knowledge for specialized intervention in direct practice, with special emphasis on Hispanic children and families. Worden School's PhD program has an emphasis on advanced social work practice and focuses on preparing practitioner-scholars who bridge the gap between academic researchers and practitioners.

The Worden School is often recognized for excellence in educating the country's social workers.

## OUR MISSION

In accordance with the Catholic teachings of social justice and the philosophy and purposes of Our Lady of the Lake University, and in adherence to the purposes of social work education articulated by the Council on Social Work Education, the mission of the Worden School of Social Service is:

- Develop competent social workers for specialized intervention in direct practice with Hispanic/Latin@ children and families;
- Prepare social workers for professional practice in culturally diverse settings, especially agencies that serve clients from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and
- Generate and disseminate knowledge that advances social and economic justice, enhances human well-being, and promotes effective practice with Hispanic/Latin@ children and families.



---

# PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Ph.D. Program in Worden School of Social Service has as its purpose and commitment the production of social work scholars. The program provides students the opportunity to actively configure and plan their learning with faculty advising and collaborative mentorship. As students move through the many steps of achieving their Ph.D., the Worden School affordances include a vibrant intellectual community committed to the ideals of the social work profession and the advancement of social work scholarship.

The Ph.D. Program emphasizes:

- Knowledge development in social work science
- Mastery of the conduct of scholarly inquiry
- Development of teaching skills
- Publication and presentation of scholarly work
- Collaborative scholarship in substantive areas
- An intellectual culture that values new ideas and discovery

Graduates of the Ph.D. Program are expected to: 1) demonstrate the ability to think conceptually and critically about social work issues; 2) apply theoretical and practical reasoning to social work practices and social policy; and 3) conduct research that contributes to the social work knowledge base. Students are expected to enter the program with a basic proficiency in case study, qualitative analysis, and statistical reasoning.

When students arrive, they should begin identifying potential mentors among faculty members. A mentor is a faculty member who may have been identified by the student as a scholar with whom they might like to work and who usually shares the scholarship interests, methodological approaches, or interpersonal fit with the student. Mentors may be graduate assistant supervisors, dissertation chairs, or other Worden full-time faculty with whom the student works.

The PhD social work program is an academically rigorous program that prepares students for research, service, and teaching within minority serving institutions. Focus on pedagogy for diverse student populations is emphasized. The program design is particularly focused on supporting under-represented scholars through research involvement and mentoring. Students will finish the program armed with an extensive repertoire of knowledge and theory and the ability to conduct research. With this background, graduates of the program are in a unique position to contribute to the knowledge base about what interventions are most effective in addressing the needs of diverse populations.

This program is ideal for students who have a desire to teach and conduct in-depth research into various facets of social work in tertiary-level academic institutions. This program is also a good fit for students who wish to advance their careers as social work leaders and administrators. The program aims to train educators who are especially skilled for employment within minority-serving institutions. Students will finish the program armed with an extensive repertoire of knowledge and theory and the ability to conduct research in practice settings. With this background, graduates of the program are in a unique position to contribute to the knowledge base about what interventions are most effective in addressing the needs of diverse populations.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

- Provide a rigorous program of work that challenges students to think critically about social work practice, research and teaching with diverse populations.
- Provide mentoring and other support to students that enable to strengthen professional skills and serve others with competence and respect.
- Contribute to the social work profession through the development and transference of evidence-based knowledge and service.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Think critical about social work issues from a broad range of theoretical and research perspectives, as evidenced by successful dissertation defense and competency assignments in designated courses throughout the curriculum.
- Effectively communicate research in writing and contribute to the profession through scholarship, as evidenced by a presentation of research at peer reviewed conference, publication in peer reviewed journals, successful dissertation defense and competency assignments in designated courses throughout the curriculum.
- Ability to teach in minority serving institutions, as evidenced by successful completion of the pedagogy series.

## **COMMUNICATION**

All doctoral students are required to provide the Ph.D. Program Office with current and accurate contact information, including telephone, mailing address, and email address. Note that all doctoral students must use their official ollusa.edu email address to communicate the faculty and staff in Worden and must arrange to have their email address included on the automatic distribution list maintained by the OLLU IT Help Desk. This is the principle means of communication that occurs within the school. Finally, students are responsible for maintaining regular contact with the Ph.D. Program Office, the program director, and their academic advisor and mentor. All communications from the Ph.D. program follow Central Standard Time (CST) and it is the student's responsibility to convert meeting times and class times to their time zone.

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Admission decisions are made by the PhD Committee. Application deadline for admission to the program is every fall semester for summer start. Verify with the OLLU Graduate Office on the admission date as it may change from year to year. The admission requirements are:

- MSW from a CSWE-accredited social work program
- Two years of post-MSW practice experience (This requirement will be waived if applicants demonstrate the ability to fulfill this requirement before graduating from the Ph.D. program).
- A graduate GPA of at least a 3.0 on a 4-point scale
- Three recommendations from academics (preferred) or professionals, who can attest to the applicant's potential for doctoral work.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- A 3-5-page personal statement that includes the following:

- Educational background
  - Interest in the Ph.D. program
  - Professional experience and approach to social work practice
  - Areas of research interest
  - Career plans and how a Ph.D. in social work supports those plans
- A writing sample. APA formatted on a current social work topic of your choice, or an original, professional, solely authored and documented scholarly writing that demonstrates academic and critical thinking writing skills. Students are encouraged to use their judgment on what best illustrates the student's potential for doctoral work and their commitment to social work research.
  - Interview with a PhD committee member
  - Non-refundable application fee.

## **STATEMENT ON POST MSW PRACTICE EXPERIENCE**

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires that faculty have a minimum of two years of post MSW practice experience to teach social work practice courses. This means that to teach throughout the curriculum faculty members must have 2 years post MSW practice experience. Teaching across the curriculum is generally necessary at Carnegie classified baccalaureate, master's and R3 doctoral institutions. This experience is critical to employability. The Ph.D. program offers conditional admission if students plan to fulfil the 2-year post MSW experience during their tenure as doctoral students.

## **KEY FEATURES OF THE Ph.D. PROGRAM**

The Ph.D. program in Worden School of Social Service is designed for working professionals. Below, the key features of the Ph.D. program, degree plan, degree requirements, dissertation guidelines and procedures, are described. Key features of the PhD program include:

- 54 credit hours online program
- Four-year program
- Cohort model (academic year begins every summer in June)
- Fall and spring courses will feature a combination of synchronous and asynchronous class sessions
- Summer courses will include a one-week summer residency on OLLU's main campus in San Antonio.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

All students must successfully complete the 54 credit hours, which includes core doctoral courses in the Ph.D. Program, and dissertation credits. Students advance to candidacy after successful passing the comprehensive exam. Please see the [graduate catalog](#) for more information.

## **ADVISING**

All students will meet annually with their advisors to review the Ph.D. Student Core Competencies and Expectations (Appendix A). This is an opportunity for students to participate in formal advising about their progress in the program, and their development as a scholar. Students may seek additional advising at any time with the Ph.D. program director.

## **MENTORING**

Mentoring is a critical piece of PhD student development. Students are encouraged to form mentorship relationships with faculty to support their development in research, pedagogy, and career guidance in academia. Students are not assigned formal mentors and are free to connect with natural mentors they find supportive.

## **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS (GTA)**

The mission of the Ph.D. program is to prepare scholars for academic appointments in minority-serving institutions. An important component of this is expertise in pedagogy through experiential learning. In partnership with the MSW and BSW programs, there are opportunities to serve as a teaching assistant. Graduate assistantships serve as the primary means of support for many graduate students, enabling them to work toward their degrees and grow professionally while providing the University the benefit of high-quality services. GTAs are expected to perform well academically and to meet teaching, research, and/or service obligations.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are Instructor of Records (IRs), and are responsible for the instruction of a course as well as the responsibilities that accompany that assignment such as grading papers, meeting with students, etc. GTAs will be assigned under teaching mentor for the first academic year. GTAs may teach only one 7-week courses per semester in the MSW program. If GTAs are assigned to teach in the BSW program, they are eligible to teach only one 16-week course per semester. Each GTA is eligible for a \$2500.00 stipend per course for the first year while working with teaching mentors. After the first year, GTAs transition to adjunct professor position and start working independently without a teaching mentor. The teaching mentor will provide recommendation for this transition. After the transition, adjunct professors are eligible for \$3,000 stipend per course.

Teaching assistantships should be structured around both the needs of the teaching assistant and the needs of the curriculum in which they teach. Doctoral students who are interested to teach in the MSW program should complete Teaching Assistantship Intent Disclosure Form (Appendix B) and email to the Ph.D. Program Assistant.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Graduate teaching assistants/instructor of record perform a variety of roles related to teaching that represent different levels of independence and direct contact with students. The level of responsibilities assigned to GTA-IRs is determined by the program in consultation with the Worden director, PhD program director, and the program director for the program they are teaching in (e.g., MSW or BSW). To the extent possible, assignments are made that contribute to the intellectual and professional development of graduate students. Graduate teaching assistants/instructors of record are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic duties as are members of the faculty. They are expected to maintain the highest levels of professional and ethical standards.

Although the professional development of graduate students as teachers is considered an important part of doctoral training, The Worden School of Social Service is committed to ensuring that the students have sufficient time for other, equally important, components of their doctoral education. No TA is expected to perform instructional duties that would take more than 20 hours per week. Students are limited to teaching a maximum of two classes per semester.

The most important day-to-day duties of a graduate teaching assistant include:

- Teaching the assigned curriculum
- Leading class discussions and answering student questions
- Evaluating student essays, projects, labs, tests, and other assessments
- Maintaining records on student progress/grades

### **Graduate Teaching Assistant Responsibilities**

- Dedicate 12-20 hours per week (averaged over the term) to TA duties.
- Approach the teaching as a learning experience complementary to other aspects of graduate education.
- Adhere to University school policies, requirements, and deadlines pertaining to topics such as academic integrity, safety protocols, maintaining a classroom respectful of diversity, as well as the registrar's procedures and deadlines.
- Acquire proficiency in the course content and methodologies, complemented by appropriate pedagogical methods.
- Manage the assigned TA responsibilities along with other academic work, keeping to deadlines, advancing appropriately through academic milestones.
- Regularly meet the faculty supervisor, request feedback, and seek opportunities to continually develop pedagogical proficiencies.
- Hold regular scheduled office hours.
- Respond to student emails with 48 hours.

---

# ACADEMIC POLICIES

## THE Ph.D. COMMITTEE

The PhD committee has a responsibility to assist the Ph.D. program director for the direction of the Ph.D. program. The committee consists of five members including the Ph.D. program director, and members of the faculty appointed by the Worden director in consultation with the PhD program director. The committee also has responsibilities for admitting and advising Ph.D. students, supervising the Ph.D. curriculum, and implementing the policies and procedures of the PhD program. A Ph.D. student from each cohort serves as a student representative on the Ph.D. committee. The term is for one academic year and every year the term is revisited for a vote. There is no term limit. Student representatives are non-voting members and may be asked to leave meetings that address confidential information.

### Faculty Requirements to serve in the Ph.D. Committees:

Preference will be in this order:

- Doctorate in social work and tenured
- Non-social work doctorate and tenured
- Doctorate in social work non-tenured
- Non-social work doctorate non-tenured

Note: Master's level faculty will not be allowed to serve in the Ph.D. committee.

### Responsibilities of the PhD Committee Members:

- Attend the Ph.D. Committee standing meeting (Biweekly or monthly)
- Review all application materials and recommend students for admissions
- Interview applicants to support admissions decisions
- Curriculum revisions
- Advise Ph.D. students
- Discuss and vote on changes in policies, procedures, and curriculum in the Ph.D. program
- Assist the Ph.D. Program Office in developing documents
- Assist the PhD. Program Office in any other task determined by the Ph.D. committee.

## COURSE LOAD AND CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

Failure to remain continuously enrolled may lead to dismissal from the program. This policy is particularly relevant to students who have completed coursework but have yet to complete their dissertations. Students who have completed coursework will be required to maintain continuous registration each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed. If students do not complete the dissertation while taking the dissertation courses, students can enroll in 1 credit hour dissertation course until the dissertation is completed.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Students in the doctoral program may apply for a leave of absence each term (Fall or Spring) not to exceed one year when events such as illness or injury, active military service, or the need to provide care for a family member prevents active participation in the degree program. OLLU adheres to the guidelines of the University. For more information, please see [OLLU's Student Handbook](#).

## **DEFEREMENT POLICY**

The Ph.D. program offers up to two deferments per year on first-come-first-served basis. Students who are not able to attend the University for the specific term to which they have applied should contact the Ph.D. Program Office stating the reason for requesting a deferral. The Ph.D. program director will present the request to the Ph.D. committee for approval. Once the request for deferral is approved, students can defer their enrollment only for one academic year. No fee will be assessed to defer admission.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES**

Our Mission: [Accessibility Services](#) strive to empower students with disabilities to gain success in and access to their educational, professional, and personal opportunities afforded with the skills of self-reliance and self-advocacy on campus and in the community. Accessibility services was committed to diversity and a campus culture of inclusion that is necessary for a rich learning environment and essential in preparing students to work, live and contribute to an increasingly complex society. Accessibility services provides reasonable accommodations to ensure students with disabilities to participate in and benefit from our campus, programs, and activities.

Students who wish to apply or who have qualified disabilities covered through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amended or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and who desire assistance should contact Accessibility Services at (210) 431-4010, email [ada@ollusa.edu](mailto:ada@ollusa.edu), or visit the office located in the Walter Student Service Center, Suite 206, Room 211. Students can also apply for services online.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Our Lady of the Lake University provides equal employment opportunities to all qualified applicants and employees without regard to their race, color, ancestry, religion, gender (except where gender is a bona fide occupational qualification), sexual orientation, age, national origin, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic or status that is protected by federal or Texas law. The University's policy is to ensure that recruitment, hiring, training, education, promotion, and all other employment actions, such as compensation, benefits, transfers, layoffs, return from layoff, tuition reimbursement, social and recreational programs are administered in accordance with these protections for all employees.

## **STATEMENT ON POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Our Lady of the Lake places a high commitment to the core values of community, integrity, trust, and service, and it is our policy to provide an educational experience free of sexual harassment, misconduct, violence or discrimination. Faculty members are considered "responsible employees" who must report all incidents of sexual misconduct with full detail within 72 hours of learning of the event. If you believe you are the victim of sexual harassment, misconduct, violence or discrimination,



and you are a student, please visit the Title IX website to contact a Deputy Coordinator:  
[www.ollusa.edu/titleix](http://www.ollusa.edu/titleix).

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**

Academic dishonesty refers to student conduct in academic assignments or situations that violates the norms of the academic community of students and scholars. In practice, it usually refers to academic cheating or plagiarism. Our Lady of the Lake University distinguishes between academic dishonesty, which is handled through the Academic Affairs Division, and other violations of the Student Code of Conduct, which are dealt with by the office of student life. Penalties for academic dishonesty may include expulsion or suspension from the University, failure or grade reduction in the affected course or assignment, or a lesser penalty as appropriate.

## **GRADING SYSTEM AND GPA**

To receive course credit, students must be able to demonstrate attainment of the course's specified academic outcomes. Faculty members may use various kinds of evaluative tasks for this purpose, including quizzes, examinations, papers, presentations, special projects, and external assessments. Students are expected to meet faculty specifications and deadlines for these assessment activities. Students who are unsatisfied with their course grades can follow the Academic Grievance Procedures.

The grade point average is obtained by dividing the grade points earned by the semester/term hours attempted. The cumulative grade point average used for most records is based on the total grade points earned at Our Lady of the Lake University. Although faculty may at their discretion add pluses or minuses to letter grades, these distinctions are not calculated in the grade point average.

Grading scale: A = 100 - 90, B = 89 - 80, C = 79 - 70, D = 69 - 60, F = 59 or below.

## **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

In special circumstances it may be necessary for a grade of incomplete to be assigned. The assignment of incomplete grades is at the discretion of the instructor. An incomplete grade may only be assigned when more than 50% of the coursework has been completed. A student may register for courses in the semester immediately following the issuing of an incomplete, but that incomplete must be resolved before the student can register for subsequent semesters.

## **TRANSFER OF CREDITS**

Students may not transfer previous doctoral coursework.

## **ACADEMIC STANDING**

To maintain acceptable academic standing, each student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 and receive a grade of at least "B-" in all courses. A "C" grade or lower grade ("D" and "F") shall not be counted towards doctoral degrees. Students who fail to maintain these minimal requirements will be placed on academic probation with continuation in the program subject to review by the PhD program director, in consultation with the doctoral faculty and the director of the Worden School of Social Service.

## **ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE**

Our Lady of the Lake University provides a uniform method by which students can pursue academic grievance issues.

Definition: An academic grievance is an allegation that something has occurred that violates existing University academic policy or established practices or is intrinsically wrong. Academic grievance issues include but are not limited to complaints about alleged violations of the institution's academic policies (e.g., application of grading policies), unfairness in the application of policies (e.g., accusation of plagiarism or cheating), or other academic matters.

Evaluation of a student's academic performance in a course or program of the University, when conducted by a faculty member, is presumed to be valid unless there is proof that the evaluation was significantly and adversely affected by prejudice (bias against the student as an individual or as a member of a group or class) and/or capriciousness (unjustifiable deviation from generally acceptable academic standards or procedures, or from explicit understandings established for the course or through the course syllabus, which is the de facto contract for course objectives, requirements and expectations). Students must follow each step of the Academic Grievance Procedure as detailed to be reviewed.

---

# THE QUALIFYING EXAM

## Purpose

The qualifying examination tests a student's knowledge and capacity for critical analysis in research and pedagogy. The qualifying exam evaluates students' knowledge and application of the contents covered in all courses before the Spring II semester. The exam is comprised of written and oral examinations. The qualifying examination is a separate and independent requirement at the doctoral level.

## The Qualifying Exam Committee

The qualifying examination committee will consist of three members, including the qualifying exam committee chair. Only full-time doctorate faculty in Worden School of Social Service can participate in the qualifying examination committee. The Ph.D. program director appoints the qualifying exam committee in consultation with the director of Worden School of Social Service.

## Written Qualifying Exam Procedures

1. Once formed, the Qualifying Examination Committee will meet to develop questions in the two domains: research (includes emphasis on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) and pedagogy (teaching methodology and design). Ideally the formation of the qualifying exam and development of questions occurs no later than the first months the fall semester.
2. Each question will require a student to demonstrate the ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and/or apply knowledge in a way that gives evidence of a depth and breadth of knowledge. The expectation for the written examination is that all responses are double-spaced, 12-point font with 1-inch margins in APA style.
3. The committee will set up a session with the PhD students to discuss the general qualifying exam format and the categories of questions developed for the written qualifying exam. Any questions related to the oral exam will be discussed during this time as well.
4. Written qualifying exam questions are presented to the students by the last week of Fall II semester week.
5. Students will have one month to complete the questions and will turn them in as a set by the second week of the Spring II semester.
6. The qualifying exam committee will review and grade answers over the next 2 weeks. At least 2/3 of the committee members should "pass" the written qualifying examination to proceed with the oral exam process. If 2/3 of the committee members "fail" the written qualifying exam, the student is provided feedback and will be given an opportunity to revise "fail" responses. The revision time allowed should not be more than one month. If a student fails the written examination twice, the student will be advised to discontinue the Ph.D. program.

## Oral Qualifying Exam Procedures

1. After successful completion of the written qualifying exams, the committee will schedule the oral qualifying exams one week after the written qualifying exam is passed. The oral examination is scheduled for 2 hours.
2. The oral qualifying exam will be an extension of the written qualifying exam responses. The committee members may ask any follow-up questions related to the research topic, methodology, and teaching methodology that emerge based on the student's responses. The qualifying exam committee chair is responsible for leading the meeting, ensuring that all members of the committee could ask questions.
3. At the end of the oral examinations, the student will be asked to leave the room, and the committee will discuss the student's overall performance. Each committee member will then judge the student's performance on the oral examinations to be either "acceptable" (pass) or "not acceptable (fail).
  - a. If at least 2/3 committee votes "pass" for the oral examination, the student has passed the oral examination. This information will be communicated to the student verbally immediately after the committee's discussion.
  - b. If 2/3 of the committee votes "fail" for the oral examination, the student has not passed the required qualifying examination. This information will be communicated to the student verbally immediately after the committee's discussion.
  - c. Students will be given an opportunity to retake the oral examination only once. If a student fails the oral examination twice, the student will be advised to discontinue the Ph.D. program.

---

# THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The Ph.D. committee in Worden determines general policies governing the Ph.D. program in social work. Among the requirements established by the Ph.D. committee is the successful completion of a comprehensive examination, an exam designed to evaluate the student's work at Our Lady of the Lake University. The purpose of the examination is to provide a means by which the student demonstrates capacities for independent and systematic scholarship in keeping with the educational objectives of the doctoral program. The examination serves also as a basis for determining the student's readiness for pursuit of the doctoral dissertation. While the objectives of the examination differ from those of the dissertation, it is recognized that in some situations inter-connectedness may result in sharpening the student's understanding of issues bearing upon the dissertation research problem.

The comprehensive examination in the Ph.D. Program consists of a written proposal and an oral exam. Regarding timeline, the student should submit a comprehensive examination proposal by the *November 15 at 11:50 pm* of the third year of study and complete the examination process by the end of the fall semester. If revisions are required, the student will be asked to submit the revised proposal. All students are expected to have successfully passed their comprehensive exam by the end of their third year in the program.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION PROPOSAL

The exam focuses on a selected problem of importance for social work. The student selects the comprehensive exam topic in consultation with their advisor. The student prepares the comprehensive examination proposal with the advice and consultation of their mentor/advisor. Students may indicate preferences for Comprehensive Examination Committee members among Worden faculty, however, the Ph.D. program director is not bound by those preferences.

The comprehensive examination proposal is a proposal for an examination. It is not a dissertation proposal. The purpose of the readers in this phase is to ensure that the topic can be the subject of an examination (for example, that it is a significant problem of concern to social work). The student should prepare a comprehensive examination proposal, no longer than **15 pages** (double spaced excluding title and reference pages), that presents an argument for a substantive area of interest that is of central importance to social work. The proposal should "build a case" for the inclusion or exclusion of specific material in each section. For example, given the page limitation of the paper, it may not be possible to address all the theories or policies that may be relevant to a particular topic. In such a case, the proposal needs to address which theories and policies will be covered in the paper and provide a rationale for the choices. The readers guide the student in terms of the specifics of what the readers expect to be covered in an examination paper on this topic being mindful of the five required areas below.

Required areas of comprehensive exam proposal:

- A. Statement of the substantive/problem area
- B. Analysis of theoretical frameworks for examining the problem area
- C. Review of key policy approaches in the problem area
- D. Critical review of relevant research
- E. Conclusion and Implication

All proposals need to meet scholarly standards, such as APA format, scholarly language, and good grammar. The Proposal should be submitted to the Ph.D. Program Office when completed. Once submitted, the proposal is distributed to the advisor and readers. The advisor and readers have 2 weeks to review and provide written feedback noting strengths and critiques of the proposal. Their critiques are submitted back to the Ph.D. Program Office for distribution and will be distributed together after they are all received. The reviews will be given to the student with copies to the advisor and all readers. The student and the advisor should meet to discuss the reviews. The student and advisor, in conjunction with the Ph.D. Program Office, schedule the oral review meeting within two weeks of receiving faculty feedback.

## **THE ORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

The purpose of the oral comprehensive examination is to provide the student an opportunity to respond to the critiques and any other questions that the readers may raise in relation to the comprehensive exam proposal. The examination lasts approximately ninety minutes.

The comprehensive exam oral examination meeting is expected to be held with the student present in person or virtually. All faculty on the Comprehensive Exam Committee should be present in person or virtually. A decision on the student's performance is determined by majority vote of the Comprehensive Examination Committee. The options for the vote on the student's written and oral presentation performance are pass or fail. Upon review of the materials, the Ph.D. Program Committee may concur with the comprehensive exam committee and approve a "Pass with Distinction." The advisor should have the "Comprehensive Examination or Paper Orals Form" signed and forwarded to the Ph.D. Program Office within two days following date of oral examination. In the event of failure, the student will be allowed to proceed through the examination (paper and oral) a second time. A student is allowed only two opportunities to complete the comprehensive examination process before being withdrawn from the Ph.D. Program.

Role of the faculty in the Comprehensive Exam Committee, except for the faculty advisor, is to function as reviewers and will read the comprehensive examination proposal only at the time of final submission. Therefore, once the examination proposal is approved the role of the readers is to be evaluative, not consultative. The student's advisor/chair plays an active consulting role during preparation for the comprehensive exam paper proposal. However, after a comprehensive exam paper proposal is accepted, the advisor's role is largely administrative. As chairperson and member of the comprehensive oral examination committee, the advisor's responsibility is to advise the student and to ensure a fair hearing for the student, consistent with the criteria established in this document. A student's advisor and other faculty may offer general consultation on logistics or structure of the exam proposal at any point during the comprehensive examination process but should not provide consultation on the content of the exam itself. No faculty member, except for the faculty advisor, will read all or a portion of a comprehensive proposal prior to the time it is sent to the Ph.D. Program Office and forwarded to the assigned readers for reading. As the comprehensive examination is, by definition, an examination, students should ensure that the proposal is solely their own work.

---

# DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

## INTRODUCTION

Completion of a dissertation is a major requirement of the program leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree. The Worden Ph.D. program at OLLU requires the completion of a satisfactory dissertation in the field of social work. The dissertation is an original piece of scholarly research on a topic that has been jointly agreed upon by the student and her/his dissertation committee members. It is a major undertaking that should reflect the highest standards of scholarship and make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in the field of social welfare and the profession of social work.

The dissertation requirement is designed to afford students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to (1) do competent research in social work, (2) organize materials logically, write clearly, and make sound interpretations and conclusions from the facts presented, and (3) contribute to the field.

The dissertation supervision process at the Ph.D. program is a committee directed undertaking. While each candidate and committee will work out the methods and procedures somewhat differently, the basic principles require all committee members to be involved in decisions and checkpoints in a very active manner. The dissertation committee should work collaboratively throughout the dissertation process. Further, in the interest of assuring that policies are applied to all students in the same way, the Ph.D. program director may serve as a quality checkpoint/monitoring role by reviewing and signing off on decisions at various points in the process should any concerns arise.

## SELECTING A DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Students should consult with their advisor and the Ph.D. program director as they begin to consider selecting a dissertation committee. The choice of members for the committee should be guided by the candidate's need for consultation on substantive matters, research methods, and statistical analytic approaches. It is common for a student to form a committee by choosing one faculty with whom they have an established working relationship, one faculty who has special substantive knowledge related to the research topic, and one faculty who has special research methods or statistical knowledge congruent with the proposed dissertation research. Clearly a particular faculty member can fulfill more than one of these roles. Any faculty member who is asked to serve as the chair or member of a dissertation committee is free to accept or decline the student's request.

The dissertation committee is composed of three or five members. A dissertation committee of four members is not allowed. Minimally three are voting members, including the dissertation chair (student's advisor). In the case of a committee of three, two of the faculty members should be full-time doctorate faculty in Worden while the third member should be a doctorate faculty or content expert outside Worden. In the case of a committee of five, four of the faculty, including the chair should be full-time doctorate faculty in Worden while the fifth member should be a doctorate faculty or content expert outside Worden. Students are encouraged to choose the chair of their dissertation first and meet with their chair for advisement prior to inviting other committee members. Once dissertation committee is formed, doctoral students are responsible to submit Dissertation Committee Declaration Form (Appendix C) to the Ph.D. program office. See the university requirements on [dissertation procedures](#).



## Faculty Requirements to serve in Dissertation Committees

- *Dissertation chair*: Doctoral and full-time tenure track faculty member of Worden.
- *Dissertation committee member*: Doctorate
- *External committee member*: A doctorate faculty or content expert outside Worden.
- *Internal Members*: Doctoral faculty member of Worden faculty.

### Notes:

- Students also may request that a non-tenure track, full-time Worden faculty member to serve as committee chair. These requests must be supported by a strong rationale and be approved by the Ph.D. committee.
- A faculty member can serve as a dissertation chair in the maximum of *three committees* per cohort. However, a faculty member can serve as internal member without any limitation.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

The Dissertation chair will be selected based on content expertise. This should include topic interest or subject matter expertise, experience in dissertation direction, or methodology expertise. The chair is responsible for guiding the candidate to produce doctoral level, original scholarship in the proposed topic area. The chair must be a tenured or tenure-track full-time faculty member in the Worden school and must hold an earned doctorate.

The Chair's responsibilities include:

- Being familiar with current dissertation policies and procedures in the Ph.D. program in the Worden School
- Advising the candidate from the proposal stage through the final defense of the dissertation
- Guiding the candidate in the selection of dissertation committee members
- Guiding the candidate to set a realistic timeline for completion of the dissertation
- Responsibly assigning the candidate a grade of pass (successful progress) or fail (no progress) each semester in the dissertation phase
- Guiding the candidate toward achieving a high level of technical and ethical quality in the dissertation research
- Assisting the candidate in developing a quality dissertation proposal and in navigating the dissertation proposal approval process
- Providing guidance on the research proposal structure, formatting, content and setting clear expectations for timely completion of the proposal
- Guiding the candidate in the selection of methods/procedures for data collection and analysis
- Assisting the candidate in the dissertation Proposal defense process
- Assisting the candidate in navigating the IRB approval process
- Assisting the candidate in data collection and analysis
- Preparing the candidate for the defense process

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

All members of the candidate's committee share responsibility in ensuring that the candidate produces high-quality scholarship. Committee members are responsible for reading manuscripts within the agreed-upon minimum 14-day time frame (per committee member), suggesting substantive editorial changes, and providing rationale for their support and critiques. Committee members who

perceive major flaws that are likely to result in a candidate's unsuccessful defense should discuss these concerns with the candidate and chair immediately.

Committee member's responsibilities include:

- In cooperation with the chair, advising the candidate from the dissertation proposal stage through the final defense of the dissertation
- Provide subject matter expertise as requested by chair or candidate
- Reading drafts and providing meaningful feedback at each defense stage of the dissertation process
- Guiding the candidate in the selection of methods/procedures for data collection and analysis\*\*
- Assisting the candidate in data collection and analysis\*\*
- Corresponding with the chair and candidate as needed for clarification/resolution of methodological issues during the dissertation process\*\*

\*\* Methodologist only (if the Chair is not performing both roles). A Methodologist should be selected who has expertise in the type of study the candidate is pursuing (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods).

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENT**

The candidate is expected to engage in active preparation of the Dissertation process from the onset of the doctoral program. Candidates are responsible for choosing a topic, submitting proofread drafts of materials to the chair, preparing adequately for meetings, thoroughly reviewing all dissertation policies and procedures of the university, and communicating on a regular basis with the chair. The candidate is expected to always maintain a respectful and professional attitude.

Candidates are expected to maintain contact with the chair throughout the dissertation process to ensure that the research and writing adhere to the agreed-upon plan. As the project is the candidate's responsibility, the doctoral student must frequently keep the chair informed of progress. The candidate should contact the Chair in the event of any significant changes in his/her personal or professional life which may interfere with program completion. Virtual meetings may be scheduled with your chair, methodologist, or the whole committee may be arranged, if needed.

## **THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

The dissertation proposal document must be a substantive, carefully crafted, research-based document. Typically, the proposal comprises the first three chapters of the dissertation. In most cases, this consists of a statement of the research focus, a conceptual or theoretical framework, a review of related literature, and a description of the study's design and methods. Different research designs can employ different proposal formats and require different emphases among the types of information included in the document. In all cases, a dissertation proposal should provide a clear, systematic, and conceptually sound overview of the proposed study that explains in detail why and how the study will be conducted, and the scholarly literature in which it is embedded.

The doctoral student will work closely with the dissertation chair on the development of the dissertation proposal. The candidate may query other committee members with specific questions, but they are typically not involved in reviewing intermediate drafts of the proposal.

In selecting a topic, the student should keep in mind that:

1. The subject should have significance for social work theory, knowledge, practice, or for social work research methodology, or for new syntheses or analyses of existing social work knowledge.
2. The problem may relate to the past or the present; may make use of library material or material obtained in the field and such material may be from primary or secondary sources.
3. The study should be feasible in terms of the time requirements of the program and available resources.

## **Structure of the Dissertation Proposal**

The dissertation is an original scholarly work in which a student demonstrates her/his ability to conduct research pertaining to an important problem in social work or social welfare. The dissertation study should be conducted with the highest possible standards of rigor and scholarship. Students submit a written dissertation proposal following the successful completion of the comprehensive examination. The dissertation proposal is developed in consultation with a student's dissertation chair and is a required step before beginning dissertation research. The proposal should provide sufficient detail about the proposed study's purpose, aims, and methodology. Issues of appropriateness and feasibility should also be addressed in the proposal. Dissertation proposals should be written with strict adherence to APA style (7<sup>th</sup> edition) and the OLLU's [Writing Guidelines for Dissertations and Theses](#). Proposals should follow the structural guidelines outlined below unless the dissertation chair or committee members advise a different outline:

### **I. Cover Page**

- The cover page should fulfill the university formatting guideline.
- See the [sample dissertation title page](#) required by the university.

### **II. Abstract**

- Statement of the problem and why it is important to address it is clear.
- Description of who is affected by the problem and/or the context is included.
- Research method to be used to study the problem is explained, including data collection and sampling of subjects.
- A brief explanation of theories to support research is provided.
- The potential implications of the dissertation research to social work practice, research, theory, and/or social welfare policy are included.

### **III. Table of Contents**

- All chapters and major sections are listed in APA style.
- All tables and figures are listed in APA style.

### **IV. Chapter 1: Introduction/Statement of the Problem**

- A brief exposition of the context and/or background on your topic and why it is important is provided, using supporting literature.
- Description of who are affected by the problem (if applicable) and/or the context is included.
- How pervasive the problem is and how it has been addressed are discussed.
- A problem statement is the issue under study and the gap in the existing literature that you seek to fill.

- Definition of terms is provided (for quantitative studies).
- Relevance/significance of topic: a brief explanation of theories that explain the problem is provided.
- A statement of purpose is provided and the position you are taking is explicitly stated.
- The central research aims are introduced, perhaps as part of the purpose statement.
- A brief transitional sentence or paragraph provides a conclusion for the section and objectives describing the organization of the proposal.

## **V. Chapter 2: Literature Review**

- Historical issues, policy context or background on topic described.
- How others have conceptualized the problem is addressed.
- Previous research, significant findings, relevant or current studies are discussed.
- Factors/variables that explain the problem are introduced.
- Theories used to support the research are explored thoroughly.
- What is lacking and has not been significantly researched is addressed.
- A summary that provides a conclusion drawn from the literature review and reiterates the research question/purpose for the study to lead into the methodology.
- Research Questions: The research questions and sub-questions can be incorporated as a last section of the literature chapter. Here, research questions or research objectives (for qualitative/inductive process) are stated; hypotheses are formulated (for quantitative studies); each hypothesis relates to the research questions; a null hypothesis is provided for each hypothesis.

## **VI. Chapter 3: Methods**

An explanation of research method and design to be utilized, supporting literature is provided; distinguish between different approaches within the same research method and advocate for why you chose the one you did.

- Data collection techniques (field research, participant observation, surveys, experiment, etc.) are detailed. (Required both for primary and secondary data analysis)
- Instruments to be used to gather data are discussed, including the kinds of questions used - surveys (including validity and reliability issues) or interview protocols.
- Quantitative data collection and analysis:
- For quantitative methods, provide an operational definition of concepts, variables, units of analysis, population, sampling method and sample size.
- Clearly delineate statistical data analysis: Descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis, and multivariate analysis.
- Discuss analysis software to be used if applicable.
- Discuss ethical issues relating with research with human subjects, how you plan to address those in your research design, and other IRB concerns.
- Qualitative data collection and analysis:
- Discuss context for the research, participant recruitment, sample size, type of sampling used, and researcher biases.
- Provide data analysis procedures (e.g., open coding, axial coding, selective coding, in vivo codes, preexisting; thematic analysis, horizontalization, categories/categorical aggregation, etc.).
- Discuss ethical issues relating with research with human subjects, how you plan to address those in your research design, and other IRB concerns.

- Tentative timeline is outlined; remember to include time for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process.

#### **IV. References**

- All references follow APA formatting guidelines
- All sources listed in the references are cited in the dissertation proposal.

### **EVALUATING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

Each student submits an electronic copy of the completed dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee, the group responsible for evaluating the proposal. The dissertation committee members will provide written feedback within two weeks of receiving the proposal by submitting the feedback to the dissertation committee chair and the doctoral student. Students submitting their dissertation proposal during holiday or summer breaks will need to work with their advisor and faculty readers to determine committee member availability and should not presume availability of faculty during these times. As such, the two-week time window for receiving feedback on the dissertation proposal may be longer for these students.

An oral review of the proposal with all committee members present is held within two weeks following the distribution of the feedback. Students receiving dissertation proposal feedback from faculty during holiday or summer breaks will need to work with their advisor and faculty readers to determine committee member availability and should not presume availability of faculty during these times. As such, the two-week time window for scheduling of the dissertation proposal meeting may be longer for these students.

The dissertation proposal meeting is expected to be held virtually and expected to take about 90 minutes. However, if the student prefers to defend the proposal in person at OLLU, or a hybrid defense where some of the committee members attending virtually, the Ph.D. program office will arrange a venue for the proposal defense.

The oral dissertation proposal review is intended to address any shortcomings in the proposal. The examination is *not open* to individuals not on the examining committee. An approved proposal serves as a benchmark for evaluating the adequacy of a student's completed dissertation. In assessing a student's proposal, the dissertation committee will consider the:

- relevance of the research for social work
- clarity of the study's purpose, research questions, and specific aims
- rigor of the proposed study
- originality of the research; and,
- feasibility of the overall proposal.

The dissertation chair and the student schedule a meeting of the dissertation committee to discuss the document, seek clarification, and assess the viability of the proposal as the basis of a dissertation. Approval of the proposal requires a unanimous decision by members of the committee. A student is given up to three hearings to obtain approval of the dissertation proposal. If the dissertation proposal has not been approved after three hearings, the student may dissolve or reconstitute her or his committee and begin the process again. This stage may be repeated as frequently as necessary or until the university doctoral study timeline has been exhausted.

When the dissertation committee is satisfied with the formulation of the problem and the study design, the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form, which provides for written approval of a student's dissertation proposal by all committee members, will be completed and put in the student's file. The dissertation chair is responsible for submitting the approval form within a week from the defense date. The form can be found in this handbook as Appendix D.

## CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation chair takes the lead role in coordinating work with the student in completing the dissertation. However, all committee members are to be involved in decisions and checkpoints in a very active manner. If there is any deviation from the approved dissertation proposal, the dissertation committee members should be consulted, and the changes should be approved by the committee members. Based on expertise, some committee members may be more involved in some sections of the research process than others. For example, a methodologist may be more involved in the development of the research design, sampling plan, etc. than in the substantive sections of the process.

The form and other procedures to be followed in writing the dissertation should be in accordance with the instructions contained in the most current copy of the APA publication manual. Additional formatting guidelines for the dissertation can be found at OLLU Graduate <https://ollusa.sharepoint.com/sites/OLLUGraduateStudents/SitePages/Dissertation-Guidelines-and-Procedures.aspxStudent> SharePoint site.

For all research involving the use of human subjects, students are required to complete the Application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects. The Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) reviews all human subject research conducted by faculty, staff, and students in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Trustees of the University and to comply federal regulations regarding Human Subjects Research. If you are conducting dissertation that involves any form of human subject research, you are required to [apply](#) to the OLLU IRB.

There are three levels of review by the IRB for the use of human subjects in research. The three are differentiated by the extent of review and requirement for follow up reviews. In each case, the IRB, acting as an agent of the university, determines and conducts the level of review required. The three levels are:

- **Exempt**  
A researcher may ask for their study to receive a review at the Exempt status level. If the requirements for Exempt are met, after initial IRB review and determination, no further review is necessary and no yearly follow ups are required. Exempt review should not be misinterpreted as meaning no IRB review is required, but rather that the IRB agrees with the researcher that the study needs no further review. Common exempt projects include anonymous online survey research.
- **Expedited**  
A study can receive an Expedited review involving less than all IRB members if the study involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects. An expedited review does not require a meeting and consideration by the full IRB. For more information on expedited reviews, [click here](#). Most qualitative projects fall under the expedited review process, these might include: a focus group discussing experiences with sex education, in-depth interviews regarding the emotional labor of elementary school teachers, etc.

- **Full Review**

A study may require review by the full IRB with outside experts as needed if the study places human subjects at greater than minimal risk. These types of reviews are rare on our campus.

## The IRB Process

All requests for IRB review must be submitted electronically via the OLLU online IRB system. The Application Form and Research Protocol are submitted online from the OLLU Portal-Institutional Review Board page. Every study is different, but here are some documents that typically need to be attached to your online application:

- CITI Ethics & Compliance Training Certificate
- Watch this [short video to ensure](#) you correctly register for CITI. Once you watch the video, start creating your account.
- Informed Consent Documentation exactly how the respondents will see it.
- Instruments for data collection
- Interview guides, focus group questions, demographic questionnaires, etc.
- Documentation of permission to use any copywritten scales or survey tools, etc. (If applicable)
- Recruitment materials
- Outreach email templates, social media post templates, phone call scripts, fliers, etc.

## Submission, Review and Approval Timelines

Once the IRB Coordinator determines that your application is complete, your application will be routed for electronic signatures to the following individuals:

- Principal investigator
- Faculty advisor
- Co-investigators
- Department Chair
- Dean
- IRB Coordinator

Once the signature process is complete, applications will be reviewed within the timeframe indicated below. For more information about the IRB process, please consult the [IRB Manual](#).

Review Level	Risk Level	Final Review to Approval
Exempt Review	No personal risk of physical, psychological, or social harm	5 OLLU business days*
Expedited Review	No more than minimal risk	15 OLLU business days*
Full Board Review	More than minimal risk	**

\*This time starts at date IRB coordinator deems the application complete (after signatures are received) and forwards for final review to reviewer.

\*\* Protocols must be in 'complete' status 2 weeks prior to the next scheduled IRB board meeting to be placed on the agenda for that meeting.

## Follow-Up Forms & Notice

**Protocol Change:** Changes to an approved study must be submitted online by the principal investigator using the [IRB Protocol Change Form](#) which can be found on the OLLU IRB page. Such changes include but are not limited to the addition or elimination of an investigator, changes to a



form, supportive materials, flyers, questionnaires, surveys, script for interviews, etc. After approval, the principal investigator will receive an amendment approval email listing the approved changes. The changes cannot be implemented until the approval email is received. Protocol Change reviews can take up to 10 OLLU business days.

**Continuing Review:** If the research activities associated with a protocol require a time period greater than one year past the official approval notice date, the PI must submit an online [Request for Continuing Review](#) of the protocol per Federal Regulations. Continuation Request reviews can take up to 10 OLLU business days, so we recommend applying approximately 3 weeks prior to study expiration. If you miss this deadline, you must resubmit the study for IRB approval

## **The DISSERTATION DEFENSE**

The complete dissertation draft is submitted to the dissertation committee for comments and recommendations before the dissertation defense is scheduled. Candidates should revise the manuscript to the satisfaction of all committee members prior to scheduling the defense. The final revised dissertation will be submitted to the committee members for the second time, and the dissertation defense date will be scheduled for approximately two weeks after the second draft is submitted to the dissertation committee members. The student is responsible for scheduling the oral examination in consultation with the dissertation chair.

The dissertation should be in the hands of the examining committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled examination unless the committee members agree to a different timeline. The dissertation chair will confirm in writing to each member of the examining committee the date, time, and place of the examination. The examination is open to individuals not on the examining committee; and will be announced to the Worden and if possible, the OLLU community. The dissertation committee chair will clarify the role of such individuals if such individuals attend the examination. The dissertation committee members should use a breakout session during deliberations. Non committee members are not permitted to vote or voice their opinion on the quality of the dissertation. If time permits, the audience may ask questions about the dissertation once the dissertation committee has completed its questioning and discussion.

The dissertation defense meeting is expected to be held virtually. However, if the student prefers to defend the dissertation in person at OLLU, or hybrid defense where some of the committee members attending virtually, the Ph.D. program office will arrange a venue for the defense.

The dissertation chair has the responsibility for making certain that the examination is conducted in a professional manner and that the student has a fair opportunity to defend her/his dissertation. The chair is expected to provide opportunities for each voting member of the examination committee to participate in the examination and to see that the examination is of high quality while staying within proper limits of inquiry. The chair is expected to have read the dissertation prior to the examination and participate in the examination as her/his academic expertise permits, and vote on the recommendation of the committee to pass or fail the doctoral student.

---

# RESOURCES

The link below will direct you to key University resources including the Our Lady of the Lake Student Handbook.

Website: <https://myollu.ollusa.edu/UniversityResources/Pages/default.aspx>

## Graduation Catalog

The link below will direct you to the University Graduate Catalog. In the event that there is a conflict between Worden policy and University policy, University policy supersedes Worden Policy.

Website:

[http://catalog.ollusa.edu/index.php?catoid=18&\\_ga=2.104109827.2050523148.1638538239-2132857741.1632236591](http://catalog.ollusa.edu/index.php?catoid=18&_ga=2.104109827.2050523148.1638538239-2132857741.1632236591)

## Sueltenfuss Library

To get information on the library hours, services as well as online services and much more, please visit their website.

Website: <https://library.ollusa.edu/library>

Phone: 210-431-3923

## The Mary Francine Danis Writing Center

The Writing Center staff help people overcome writer's block, offer suggestions for focusing and organizing assignments, and provide a "second pair of eyes" for a nearly finished piece of writing. The staff works with students at all levels and in all subjects. Consultations are available in person or over the phone.

Website: <https://www.ollusa.edu/academics/academic-support/academic-center-for-excellence/index.html>

Phone: 210-528-7160

## Registrar Office

The Registrar's Office handles information regarding the academic calendar dates as well as information on graduation and commencement. For more info, please visit their website.

Website: <https://www.ollusa.edu/registrars-office/index.html>

Phone: 210-434-6711 EXT. 2316      TOLL FREE: 800-436-6558

## Financial Aid

Our Lady of the Lake University understands the economic realities of financing a college education. It is part of the OLLU mission to provide resources and options that make a quality, private education affordable for all families. Visit their website for further information.

Website: <https://www.ollusa.edu/costs-aid/index.html>

Phone: 210-434-6711 EXT 2299

## Phi Alpha

“Through knowledge - the challenge to serve” is the motto of the Phi Alpha National Honor Society for social work students. Membership in the Worden School of Social Service Delta Delta chapter of Phi Alpha is open to all graduate and undergraduate social work students who have demonstrated excellence in academic achievement and are willing to promote social work goals and ideals through volunteer activities in the local San Antonio community. The Delta Delta Chapter accepts applications for membership twice per academic year accepting applications in the beginning of the Spring and Fall school semester. PhD of Social Work students are eligible for active membership after achieving:

- A minimum of one semester (or six credit hours) of coursework.
- A minimum grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Students entering the program may apply for provisional membership for the first semester, until such time they meet the membership requirements or are deemed ineligible due to failure to meet eligibility requirements.

Students will receive the email address of the President of the Phi Alpha Honor Society. Students (online and on –campus) that are eligible are encouraged to contact (staff advisor for Phi Alpha), at [phi.alpha@ollusa.edu](mailto:phi.alpha@ollusa.edu) if interested in joining the Honor Society.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Our Lady of the Lake University Worden School of Social Service PhD Student Core Competencies and Expectations

#### PhD Student Core Competencies and Expectations

This document is intended to support Ph.D. students as they develop core competencies and expectations for the successful completion of their doctoral education. Each of the suggested activities below can be completed as part of the student’s work with their mentor, or through their own development of an independent stream of research.

Over the course of their graduate careers at OLLU, students will have several opportunities to participate in activities not emphasized below. We encourage students to work with their mentors to:

1. balance these opportunities alongside expectation for their professional development, and
2. develop strategic ways to synergize practice, service, teaching, and research-related activities.

Examples of these other opportunities include:

- Service activities (e.g., committee work, leadership positions)
- Editorial assistance (e.g., help mentor organize edited volume; help mentor with journal editor responsibilities)
- Guest lectures outside of pedagogy class
  - a) Writing op-eds
  - b) Community service and advocacy
- Community engagement related to research, professional development, and/or leadership
- Opportunities to learn outside Worden School of Social Service (elsewhere at OLLU and outside of OLLU)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<p><b>WRITING: Disseminate ideas through professional written and oral communication.</b> Publications are increasingly necessary on the academic job market. It is recommended that Ph.D. students develop and submit 3-4 first or co-authored publications prior to graduation</p>	<p>Submit an abstract for presentation at a regional or national conference</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to writing core competency.</p>	<p>Submit a co-authored paper in a professional journal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Submit an abstract for presentation at a national conference</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to writing core competency.</p>	<p>Submit a first-authored paper for publication</p> <p>Submit an abstract for presentation at a national conference</p> <p>Write a full grant proposal based on a published RFP</p> <p>*Gain experience in grant proposal development by writing and submitting a grant application to fund dissertation research.</p> <p>*Developing parts of a grant</p>	<p>Submit a first-authored paper for publication</p> <p>Submit an abstract for presentation at a national conference</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Successfully defend and submit dissertation</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to writing core competency.</p>

			<p>application with mentor</p> <p>Successfully write and defend Dissertation Proposal</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to writing core competency.</p>	
<p><b>RESEARCH: Learn to use and apply appropriate and ethical standards for the responsible conduct of social work research</b></p>	<p>Complete IRB training</p> <p>Develop expertise in beginning data analysis</p> <p>*Practice data management</p> <p>* Univariate Analysis</p> <p>* Bivariate analysis</p> <p>Qualitative Methodology I</p> <p>*Individual qualitative interviews or focus groups</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to research competency.</p>	<p>Develop expertise in intermediate, multivariate data analysis</p> <p>*Pre-Analysis Data Screening</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>*Participate in primary data collection</p> <p>*Survey development and assessment</p> <p>Qualitative Methodology II</p> <p>Quantitative Methodology</p> <p>* Develop a quantitative research proposal.</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to research competency.</p>	<p>Develop and submit an IRB proposal</p> <p>Develop expertise in advanced, mixed-methods analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Begin dissertation research</p> <p>* Learn elements of project management</p> <p>*Create and submit an IRB application for dissertation study.</p> <p>Actively seek opportunities to advance learning and research skills</p> <p>* Workshops at other universities (optional)</p> <p>* Attend Cafecitos relevant to research competency.</p>	<p>Finalize dissertation research</p> <p>*Data collection, data analysis, interpret and write up results.</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to research competency.</p>
<p><b>CAREER DEVELOPMENT: Prepare for a professional career in social work research</b></p>	<p>Join professional social work organizations (e.g. CSWE, SSWR, NASW)</p> <p>Network at professional conferences</p> <p>Attend a workshop on professional development</p> <p>Develop and maintain a <i>curriculum vitae</i></p> <p>Order business cards</p> <p>Establish profile online</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Develop individual development plan in collaboration with mentor</p> <p>Network at professional conferences</p> <p>Attend a workshop on professional development</p>	<p>Network at professional conferences</p> <p>Attend a workshop on professional development</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Update and maintain a <i>curriculum vitae</i></p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to career development competency.</p>	<p>Create cover letter (s) for job applications</p> <p>Participate in Job Market Committee activities</p> <p>Network at professional conferences</p> <p>Update and maintain a <i>curriculum vitae</i></p> <p>Develop a statement on diversity and inclusion</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Research gate</li> <li>* Website</li> <li>* Social media</li> <li>* Attend Cafecitos relevant to career development competency.</li> </ul>	<p>Update and maintain a <i>curriculum vitae</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Attend Cafecitos relevant to career development competency.</li> </ul>		<p>Develop a research statement</p> <p>Participate in mock interviews</p> <p>Attend Cafecitos relevant to career development competency.</p>
<b>PEDAGOGY</b>	Culturally informed pedagogy course (required)	<p>Guest lecture (optional)</p> <p>AI position (optional)</p>	<p>Pedagogy in Distance Education course (required)</p> <p>*Fully developed online social work elective course built in Blackboard (required)</p> <p>Guest lecture (optional)</p> <p>AI position (optional)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Guest lecture (optional)</p> <p>AI position (optional)</p> <p>Develop a teaching philosophy statement</p>

Additional Comments: Use as much space as needed.  
 Click or tap here to enter text.

Student Signature & Date: Click or tap here to enter text.  
 Faculty Mentor/Chair Signature & Date: Click or tap here to enter text.

## Appendix B

### Our Lady of the Lake University Worden School of Social Service

#### TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP INTENT DISCLOSURE FORM

The mission of the PhD program at the Worden School is to prepare scholars for academic appointments in minority serving institutions. An important component of this is expertise in pedagogy. In partnership with the MSW program, there may be an opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant. This provides students with the opportunity to gain experience in teaching at the University level while under the mentorship of Worden faculty. The teaching assistantship also offers the student a stipend of \$2,500.00 per course.

Expectations will be reviewed in detail during summer residency; however, please be aware of the basic requirements below:

- Courses are a 7-week, asynchronous, fast-paced format
- Post a weekly video and announcement
- Respond to emails and forum questions within 24 hours
- Post grades within 7-10 days; a minimum of 2 assignments are submitted weekly
- Instructors must be available for the entire term of the course

To express interest, please submit this form to [amramirez@ollusa.edu](mailto:amramirez@ollusa.edu). Questions about the teaching assistantship can be emailed to Ms. Anna Marie Ramirez.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be considered a teaching assistantship for one term in \_\_\_ spring semester. (TA's are assigned one course either in term A or term B)

Spring Fast Track A for MSW Program start/end date \_\_\_\_\_

Spring Fat Track B for MSW Program start/end date \_\_\_\_\_

Fall BSW online start/end date \_\_\_\_\_

Spring BSW online start/end date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C

### Worden School of Social Service Ph.D. Program in Social Work Dissertation Committee Declaration Form

Ph.D. students must submit this Dissertation Committee Declaration Form to the Ph.D. Program office as soon as the dissertation committee is formed. The form must be completed at least the semester prior to completing the dissertation proposal defense.

Student Information	
Name:	ID:
Email:	

Proposed Dissertation Title

Dissertation Committee Members		
Full Name, Dissertation Chair		
Full Name, External Member	Affiliation (Institution)	e-mail
Full Name, Internal Member		
Full Name, Internal Member name (if applicable)		
Full Name, Internal Member (if applicable)		



- Pass: The candidate may proceed or may proceed after making revisions specified by the committee
- Deferred: There were significant concerns about the proposal, and the committee will conduct a follow-up meeting to evaluate the proposal after substantial revisions are made. A new Dissertation Proposal Approval form shall be filed after the follow-up meeting.
- Fail: The candidate does not meet the committee's expectations.

<b>Dissertation Committee</b>	
Signature- Dissertation Committee chair Date	Printed Name
Signature- External member Date	Printed Name
Signature- Internal member Date	Printed Name
Signature- Internal member (if applicable) Date	Printed Name
Signature- Internal member (if applicable) Date	Printed Name

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### WORDEN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE Ph.D. PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

#### The Dissertation Proposal Checklist

##### Cover Page:

- Cover page meets the expectation of the university formatting guideline.

##### Abstract:

- Statement of the problem and why it is important to address it is clear.
- Description of who is affected by the problem and/or the context is included.
- Research method to be used to study the problem is explained, including data collection and sampling of subjects.
- A brief explanation of theories to support research is provided.
- The potential implications of the dissertation research to social work practice, research, theory, and/or social welfare policy are included.

##### Table of Contents

- All chapters and major sections are listed in APA style.
- All tables and figures are listed in APA style.

##### Chapter 1: Introduction/Statement of the Problem:

- A brief exposition of the context and/or background on your topic and why it is important is provided, using supporting literature.
- Description of who are affected by the problem (if applicable) and/or the context is included.
- How pervasive the problem is and how it has been addressed are discussed.
- A problem statement is if addresses the issue under study and the gap in the existing literature that you seek to fill.
- Definition of terms is provided (for quantitative studies).
- Relevance/significance of topic: a brief explanation of theories to support the research is provided.
- A statement of purpose is provided and the position you are taking is explicitly stated.
- The central research aims are introduced, perhaps as part of the purpose statement.
- A brief transitional sentence or paragraph provides a conclusion for the section and objectives describing the organization of the proposal.

##### Chapter 2: Literature Review:

- Historical issues, context or background on topic are expended upon.
- How others have conceptualized the problem is addressed.
- Previous research, significant findings, relevant or current studies are discussed.
- Factors/variables that explain the problem are introduced.

- Theories used to explain the problem are explored thoroughly.
- What is lacking and has not been significantly researched is addressed.
- A summary that provides a conclusion drawn from the literature review and reiterates the research question/purpose for the study to lead into the methodology.

### **Research Questions:**

Note: The Research questions and sub-questions can be incorporated as a last section of the literature chapter.

- A statement of purpose is provided or reiterated.
- Research questions or research objectives (for qualitative/inductive process) are stated.
- Hypotheses are formulated (for quantitative studies); each hypothesis relates to the research questions; a null hypothesis is provided for each hypothesis.

### **Chapter 3: Methods:**

- An explanation of research method and design to be utilized, using supporting literature is provided; distinguish between different approaches within the same research method and advocate for why you chose the one you did.
- Data collection techniques (field research, participant observation, surveys, experiment, etc.) are detailed. (Required both for primary and secondary data analysis)
- Instruments to be used to gather data are discussed, including the kinds of questions used - surveys (including validity and reliability issues) or interview protocols.
- Quantitative data collection and analysis:
  - For quantitative methods, provide an operational definition of concepts, variables, units of analysis, population, sampling method and sample size.
  - Clearly delineate statistical data analysis: Descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis, and multivariate analysis.
  - Discuss analysis software to be used if applicable.
  - Discuss ethical issues relating with research with human subjects, how you plan to address those in your research design, and other IRB concerns.
- Qualitative data collection and analysis:
  - Discuss context for the research, participant recruitment, sample size, type of sampling used, and researcher biases.
  - Provide data analysis procedures (e.g., open coding, axial coding, selective coding, in vivo codes, preexisting; thematic analysis, horizontalization, categories/categorical aggregation, etc....).
  - Discuss ethical issues relating with research with human subjects, how you plan to address those in your research design, and other IRB concerns.
  - Tentative timeline is outlined; remember to include time for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process.

### **References:**

- All references follow APA formatting guidelines
- All sources listed in the references are cited in the dissertation proposal.



**Appendix F**

**Worden School of Social Service  
Ph.D. Program in Social Work  
Dissertation Defense Outcome**

This form is to be submitted by the dissertation committee chair to the Ph.D. Program office. This form is to be used only by the Ph.D. Program Office to track successful dissertation defense. Students are still responsible to submit the approved dissertation along with signature page to the university using ProQuest.

To be signed at the dissertation defense meeting. This form must be submitted to the Ph.D. Program Office no later than one week after the dissertation defense date.

Student Information			
Candidate's Name: First		ID:	
Last			
Email:		Defense Date:	

Title of Dissertation	
*Revisions to be approved by the dissertation committee chair before the final copy is submitted through ProQuest	
Outcome (please select one)	
Passed without revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Passed with minor revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Passed with moderate/major revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed and must be rescheduled	<input type="checkbox"/>





Dissertation Committee:

We, hereby, certify that the dissertation has been reviewed for form and content; and therefore, recommend that it be accepted for degree conferral.

--	--	--

Signature- Dissertation Committee

Printed

Dat

--	--	--

Signature- External

Printed

Dat

--	--	--

Signature- Internal

Printed

Dat

--	--	--

Signature- Internal member (if

Printed

Dat

--	--	--

Signature- Internal member (if

Printed

Dat

Comments

--





**Ph.D. Program Director Approval**

- Before approving the request for exemption, the advisor has the responsibility for investigating thoroughly the justification for the request. OLLU personnel receiving the request should thus be able confidently to assume that the facts of the case are just as represented on the petition.
- In providing a rationale for the request, the advisor/counselor should be careful to point out any unique features of the case, which would minimize the breadth of the precedent set by an approval of the exemption.
- The advisor/counselor signing the form keep a copy for their own file.

**Recommended action**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have thoroughly examined the student’s request and its implications, have found the request for exemption to be reasonable and in the best interests of the student and the University, and recommend the action specified above. (Send form to Department Chair/School Director for approval)

\_\_\_\_\_ I have thoroughly examined the student’s request and do not recommend approval of the request. Please send to the Registrar’s Office for filing.

**Comments:**

---

---

---

---

---

**Ph.D. Program Director Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department Chair/School Director Approval**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have thoroughly examined the student’s request and its implications, have found the request for exemption to be reasonable and in the best interests of the student and the University, and recommend the action specified above.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have thoroughly examined the student’s request and do **not** recommend approval of the request. Please send to the Registrar’s Office for filing.

**Comments:**

---

---

---

---

---

**Department Chair/School Director Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_