

# **Ph.D. PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

August 28, 2023



## **SIMMONS UNIVERSITY**

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook describes the general guidelines, practices, and procedures that pertain to the Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work Program. We hope it will be a useful resource during your time in the Ph.D. Program. Changes to specific policies and procedures may be introduced during the academic year, and can be found in the online version of this Handbook posted and dated on the School website. Please check the online Handbook if you have questions about the currency of particular policies and procedures. This handbook is not a contract, but rather an informational guide for students and faculty alike. Simmons University in general, and the School of Social Work (SSW), specifically, retain the unilateral right to modify or change the guidelines, practices, and procedures reflected in this handbook, or to tailor those guidelines, practices and procedures for the particular situation in the interest of the University and the School. For information on general policies that are relevant to all SSW graduate students, please read the SSW Graduate Student Handbook. Students are responsible for knowing School of Social Work policies and the policies of Simmons University.

### SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Simmons University School of Social Work is to provide exceptional training, build knowledge, and further social and economic justice. We provide transformative learning experiences to students at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels. Our graduates are prepared to practice social work in a complex, multicultural world and engage in leadership, scholarship, and teaching, drawing from evidence-based and community informed research, and interprofessional education. Our teaching, scholarship and community engagement purposively includes community stakeholders and works to empower marginalized, oppressed and excluded populations. We promote social change through advancing understanding of the connection between individual circumstances and social policy structures, case to cause.

### PROGRAM MISSION

The School of Social Work at Simmons University has offered a Ph.D. degree in Social Work since 1983. The Ph.D. Program prepares students to assume a variety of leadership roles within the profession as advanced clinical practitioners, educators, scholars and researchers. The curriculum is designed to help expert clinicians become research-trained scholar practitioners. Ph.D. students graduate with extensive research training and experience and the ability to translate research into practice.

### OVERVIEW

The Ph.D. Program is a total of 45 credits. Required courses are taken in the first phase of the program followed by a comprehensive exam in both written and oral format. After successful completion of the comprehensive exam, in the second phase, students must submit an empirical research paper to a peer reviewed scientific journal to demonstrate their substantive expertise in a specific area before a student can advance to candidacy and progress into the dissertation phase. The third phase is the dissertation

phase. Students are also required to complete a teaching practicum and research practicum during their time in the program. Students usually complete the Ph.D. Program within 4 - 8 years.

## **ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM**

### **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

The Ph.D. Program runs on a three-semester calendar Fall, Spring, Summer (September – July). Applicants should apply by February 1st for full consideration for admission and scholarships for the following September. Admission decisions will be provided by March 15. Applications submitted after February 2nd will be considered for admission on a case-by-case basis. In general, no student admissions are made after June 15. Typically, scholarships are partial and do not cover the full cost of the tuition.

All applicants must have experience as social workers and, in most cases, must hold a master's degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Applicants must submit a personal statement, a resume, a writing sample, three letters of recommendation, academic transcripts, and participate in an interview as part of the admissions process. An applicant for whom English is not the native language must achieve a satisfactory score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Details regarding application for admission can be found on the School of Social Work's website.

In order to hold a place in the Ph.D. Program for the following fall, a tuition deposit must be received by April 15 for applicants admitted to the program on or before March 15. For students admitted after March 15, a tuition deposit must be made within 4 weeks of admission.

Deferral of admission is permitted at the discretion of the School of Social Work. If an applicant is admitted to the Ph.D. Program but requests a deferral, any deferral that is granted would extend until the start of the following Fall semester only. Deferral requests must be made by July 1 of the year the applicant is admitted to the program.

### **TRANSFER STUDENTS**

If a person wishes to transfer into the SSW Ph.D. Program from another Ph.D. program attended within the past five years, the individual must complete the regular admission application. In addition, transfer applicants must submit official transcripts and syllabi for those courses and assignments completed that the applicant seeks to transfer in as credited courses in order for the School to determine if material covered is equivalent to that covered in courses in our Ph.D. Program.

If the applicant is accepted, a simple majority of the Ph.D. Committee will be needed to approve the courses and number of credits that can be transferred. The Director of the Ph.D. Program will inform the applicant in writing of the committee's determination of transfer credits.

Transfer credits will not be accepted after the first semester in the program. To be transferred, a grade of "B" or better must be received in the course. Courses for transfer must be at least 3 credits, and they must be taken on a Ph.D. level. A maximum of 9 credits may be transferred. The transfer student is required to complete all other Ph.D. program requirements at the SSW.

If a person currently enrolled in the SSW Ph.D. Program wishes to transfer to the SSW DSW Program, the individual should contact the Ph.D. Program Director and the Director of Admissions to discuss the transfer process. In most cases, current DSW students wishing to transfer to the Ph.D. Program will be required to submit a new application to the Ph.D. program and will be considered for admission as part of the annual applicant pool.

#### FINANCIAL AID

The Ph.D. Program offers scholarships to eligible students who demonstrate exceptional promise. For questions about non-scholarship based financial aid contact Student Financial Services.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM**

#### THE PH.D. PROGRAM COMMITTEE

*Charge:* The faculty delegates the Ph.D. Program Committee to set policy and implement procedures for the Ph.D. Program. This is accomplished within the general guidelines, policies, and procedures of the School of Social Work through the Faculty Policy Manual Implementation Guidelines. In implementing this charge, the Ph.D. Program Committee:

- Reviews the applications of prospective students and determines their admission to the Ph.D. Program;
- Develops, reviews, and revises the Ph.D. Program's curriculum and procedures;
- Develops, administers, and determines the outcome of the Comprehensive Examination;
- Develops, reviews and revises procedures for the dissertation process;
- Makes recommendations to the Faculty regarding awarding of the Ph.D. degree.

*Committee Membership:* The Committee consists of all full-time SW faculty who teach in the Ph.D. Program within any two-year period, the Director of the Ph.D. Program (who serves a term as Director by appointment of the Director of the School of Social Work), one faculty with a Ph.D. who currently advises Ph.D. students, and one faculty with primary teaching assignment in the DSW program. All Ph.D. faculty must be actively engaged in peer-reviewed scholarship including research. Every faculty member of the committee has one vote when it is called for. Two Ph.D. students (one from the dissertating cohort and one from the pre-dissertation cohort) will be selected by their classmates each year to serve one-year committee terms. Student members do not have a vote, and are excluded from participating in meetings when individual student issues are discussed.

#### STUDENT ADVISING

A faculty advisor is assigned to each student when they enter the Ph.D. Program. Students are free to change advisors after the first semester, but must alert their current advisor to this change. When a student chooses their dissertation committee, the chairperson of the dissertation committee becomes

the student's advisor. The advisee is expected to meet with their advisor at least once each semester at a minimum. Students have primary responsibility for scheduling these meetings. Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor regularly to establish a productive mentoring relationship. Typically, this is 2-3 times a semester prior to completing the comprehensive exams. Once a student advances to candidacy, meetings are scheduled with the dissertation committee chair as needed. Both the time of the advisor and the advisee should be respected in regards to the scheduling of and frequency of meetings.

During the period of time when students are taking courses, before the comprehensive exam, meetings between students and advisors focus on progress through the program, development of professional identity including areas of research interest. After the comprehensive exams, when a student has advanced to candidacy and selected a dissertation chair, advising focuses on the dissertation work and professional development.

Students who require support related to personal issues or general academic concerns that fall outside of the traditional advisor role are encouraged to seek assistance through the SSW Academic Services Coordinator, Student Counseling Center, the Writing Center, the Student Success Center or other student resources on campus.

Students experiencing emergencies or who are in crisis should contact 911 Emergency Services.

#### PH.D. STUDENT ORGANIZATION

The Simmons University School of Social Work Ph.D. Student Organization (PSO) is a student group that is designed to provide mutual support among Ph.D. students at all phases of the program. The PSO's primary goals are to assist students through the normal challenges of the program, to provide support during transitions and adjustments, and to provide a forum for information sharing among students and with faculty. The PSO is student-led and operated. The PSO works with the Ph.D. Director to identify and provide programming to support students throughout their tenure in the program.

## COMPONENTS OF THE Ph.D. CURRICULUM

### OVERVIEW

Ph.D. program requirements include required coursework, research and teaching practicums, a publishable paper, comprehensive exams, and a dissertation. From time to time the curriculum will be revised by the Ph.D. Committee to meet student learning needs. Current Ph.D. students will be advised of any changes and related implications for their course of study by the Director of the Ph.D. program.

### REQUIRED COURSEWORK

All students are required to take and pass the following 3-credit courses prior to taking the comprehensive exam:

- SW-OL 631 Philosophy of Science
- SW-OL 610 Social and Behavioral Theory
- SW-OL 650 Quantitative Scientific Methods
- SW-OL 651 Introduction to Statistics and Data Analysis
- SW-OL 652 Introduction to Multiple Variable Statistics
- SW-OL 654 Qualitative Scientific Methods
- SW-OL 635 Qualitative Data Analysis
- SW-OL 634 Policy Analysis in Political, Social and Economic Contexts
- SW-OL 670 Integrating Public Policy Issues and Outcomes into Social Work Research
- SW-OL 633 Survey Research Methods
- SW-OL 624 Intervention Research

In addition, all students are required to take the following before their dissertation hearing:

- HPED 521 Learning Theory and Practice (3 credits); HPED 531 Teaching Methodologies, Course Design, and Assessment (3 credits); or the equivalent.
- SW-OL 691 Ph.D. Teaching Practicum (0 credits)
- SW-OL 690 Ph.D. Research practicum (0 credits)

All students are required to continuously enroll in the one-credit SWO 685 until graduation:

- SW-OL 685A/B/C Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar

### INTEGRATIVE RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

Students are required to enroll in SW-OL 685 Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar from their first to last semesters in the program. Nine credits of the seminar, taken in the first 3 years of the program, count towards graduation. Beyond that, seminar enrollment serves as continuance enrollment in the program. Students pay a 1 credit fee and attend the seminar to continue matriculation but continuance credits are not counted towards graduation. On a case-by-case basis, students may petition to have credited enrollment waived for SW-OL 685 in order to use these credits for other purposes. Attendance and participation in SW-OL 685, however, remains a requirement for every term.

Students enroll in SW-OL 685A in Years 1 & 2; SW-OL 685B in Year 3; and SW-OL 685C in Year 4 and beyond.

#### HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

Social Work Ph.D. students may obtain a certificate in teaching from the Health Professions Educational Doctoral program while they are enrolled at Simmons. This is a three-course certificate consisting of the following courses:

- HPED-OL 521 Learning theory and practice
- HPED-OL 531 Teaching Methodologies, Course Design and Assessment
- HPED-OL 541 Educational Application and Immersion Experience: Teaching Practicum

To obtain the certificate, students take all three. However, please note that one of the courses (either HPED-OL 521 or HPED-OL 531) is a required part of the SW Ph.D. curriculum, and that HPED-OL 541 can be taken in place of SW-OL 691 (Ph.D. Teaching Practicum). Thus, the certificate requires only one additional course..

#### INDEPENDENT STUDY

In some cases, a student may apply to take an Independent Study in lieu of an existing course requirement. Independent study provides an opportunity for Ph.D. students who have advanced knowledge in an offered course area, who have missed a course offering due to a leave or other course sequencing issue, or other compelling circumstances. Students may earn three elective credits by successfully completing an Independent Study with a Simmons University faculty member. No more than two Independent Studies can be undertaken during a student's progress through the Program. To complete an Independent Study, the student must submit a proposal to the Director of the Ph.D. Program for approval using the Independent Study form (See Appendix). Students must register for the independent study (SW 699) in the semester that it takes place. Requests for registration must be initiated by the Ph.D. Program Director or the faculty member leading the independent study.

#### TEACHING PRACTICUM

A teaching practicum is required for all students regardless of prior teaching experience. Students register for the 0-credit teaching practicum course SW 691 concurrent with the practicum experience. The practicum experience requires 100 hours of teaching-related activities. Students design their practicum experience in coordination with the faculty member they select as their teaching mentor and guidelines for the practicum course.

In rare cases, a teaching practicum may need to be extended or repeated if it is determined by the practicum mentor and/or the Ph.D. Program Director that the 100 hours requirement was not met or that the student performed below expected standards in their practicum work.

Guidelines for the teaching practicum are found in the Appendices.

#### RESEARCH PRACTICUM

A research practicum is required for all students regardless of prior research experience. Students register for the 0-credit research practicum course - SW 690 Ph.D. Research Practicum concurrent with their research practicum experience. Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of research-related activities. Students design their practicum experience in coordination with the faculty member they select as a research mentor.

Options for a research practicum include:

Option A: Students may identify and affiliate with ongoing funded research projects relevant to social work that are situated in their geographic areas.

Option B: Members of the SSW faculty who hold an earned doctorate may offer the opportunity to one or more selected Ph.D. students to participate in a specific piece of faculty-directed research.

Option C: Any student or group of students may propose a student-generated research project provided that the student(s) is able to recruit a faculty member with an earned doctorate to supervise the project.

Students' involvement in any of these options should not be limited to one role, task, or activity (e.g., coding only, or interviewing only), but should allow students to become acquainted with both the substance and the processes of the research.

A written proposal is submitted to the Ph.D. Program Director (see the Appendices). A report on the research practicum is submitted at the completion of the practicum describing the work done and activities engaged in, how learning objectives were met, and reflections on the practicum experience. The research mentor will also submit a brief statement evaluating the student's performance in the practicum.

In rare cases, a research practicum may need to be extended or repeated if it is determined by the practicum mentor and/or the Ph.D. Program Director that the 100 hours requirement was not met or that the student performed below expected standards in their practicum work.

#### THE PUBLISHABLE PAPER

Students are required to submit an empirical manuscript to a scientific peer review journal prior to advancing to candidacy. The manuscript must be approved for submission by the student's adviser and the Director of the Ph.D. Program. Students are permitted to have co-authors on the paper with the provision that co-authors contribute to the paper, and that the student will be listed as first author and have participated in all aspects of the study the paper is reporting on and writing of all sections of the paper. The manuscript must be submitted in accordance with the journal's instructions. Detailed description of all authors contributions to the manuscript must be delineated on the Publishable Paper submission form provided in the Appendix.

#### THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Students must have passing grades recorded on their transcript in all required courses prior to taking the comprehensive exam. The exam has a written and a discussion component. Students must pass both

components during the same exam period in order to pass the comprehensive exam. The process for the exam is as follows:

- Exam questions will be developed by the Ph.D. Program Director and the Ph.D. Committee members. Two questions will be written for each of the five exam domains. A majority vote of the Ph.D. Committee will constitute approval of the final comprehensive exam questions for that academic year.
- Students will receive the exam by email at an appointed start date. The exam will contain detailed instructions for completing it.
- Students will submit the exam electronically by the appointed submission date and time.
- The Ph.D. Committee will review each written exam. A quorum (at least half) of the Ph.D. Committee members must participate in grading the Comprehensive Exam review.
- Students must attend a discussion portion of the examination with the Ph.D. Committee at an appointed date and time. The discussion portion of the exam is intended to offer additional opportunity for the student and Committee members to discuss content in the written exam. Committee members must review the written exam in order to participate in the discussion portion of the exam. .
- At the end of the discussion portion of the exam, the Ph.D. committee will briefly move into a closed session to discuss and vote on the outcome, the student will be invited back into the session and will verbally be given an assessment of a pass or fail mark for the comprehensive exam.

If a student is unable to take the written or discussion component of the comprehensive exam on the assigned date or schedule, due to significant illness or emergency circumstances, the student must contact the Director of the Ph.D. program in writing to report this inability and request an alternate exam date. In this situation, the Director of the Ph.D. program will consult with the Ph.D. Committee to determine when an alternate exam date can be scheduled. In most cases, the exam will be rescheduled no more than 2 weeks later than the original exam date.

Students who have approved accommodations through Simmons Disability Services for coursework, and who intend to request accommodations for the comprehensive exam, must provide an accommodation letter to the Director of the Ph.D. program at least 4 weeks prior to the beginning of the exam period.

#### QUALIFICATION INTO PH.D. CANDIDACY

Students advance into Ph.D. candidacy when all of these conditions are met:

- All required coursework has successfully been completed.
- The student has a GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- The student has passed the comprehensive exam.
- The student has completed the publishable paper requirement.
- The student has completed the research practicum.

Only when these conditions are met may students formally identify themselves as Ph.D. candidates. It is highly advised that students do not list an anticipated year of graduation as part of their student status as time to completion of the program is variable.

#### INTEGRATIVE RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR: DISSERTATING STUDENTS

After attaining candidacy, continuance course registration is required until graduation. In the Fall, Spring and Summer terms of the 3rd year, students must register for the Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar for one credit each term. These three credits count towards graduation. After the third year, when 9 credits of the seminar have been accumulated, students register for the seminar in the Fall and Spring term only. This registration serves as their continuance registration in the Ph.D. program. Students are still required to attend the weekly seminar in the Fall and Spring terms. Continuance credits are registered for, but not counted towards the final degree credit count. Students registering for the continuance courses retain the status of part-time students and this status is reported to a student's loan agency if they have one. Students with federal loans who are employed full-time and want to pay their loans so they count toward the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program while enrolled can waive the loan-deferment by filling out a form on [myfedloans.org](http://myfedloans.org).

Continuance enrollment is required to retain active student status at Simmons University and retain student benefits such as access to professors, email, and library privileges. Failure to register for enrollment will result in administrative withdrawal from the program. The Director of the Ph.D. Program automatically registers students in SWO 685A/B/C. Students are responsible for checking their registration status by the beginning of each term to ensure they have completed all required actions in Workday to be enrolled.

Candidates are required to submit a dissertation proposal a maximum of two academic years after completion of all required coursework. The dissertation must be completed within three academic years after the dissertation proposal is successfully defended. Candidates may apply to the Ph.D. Committee for extensions to these time periods. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are not guaranteed. Common reasons for extensions may include life events, health and wellness issues, among others.

Students who are granted accommodations through Disability Services in coursework should discuss the dissertation process with the Director of the Ph.D. program to better understand the components of dissertation work if they intend to seek accommodations for this portion of the program.

## THE DISSERTATION

All students are required to complete a dissertation to qualify for the Ph.D. degree. The dissertation has two phases: development and defense of the dissertation proposal and execution and defense of dissertation research. The objectives of the dissertation are:

1. To extend empirical and conceptual knowledge in a substantive area of concern to society.
2. To demonstrate the application of rigorous scientific methodology to the substantive area of study.
3. To articulate the relevance of the scholarship and science resulting from the execution of the study to society, other disciplines, and social work practice, policy and research.

The dissertation must use a research design appropriate to the formulation of the problem and developed in accordance with the canons of sound research principles. The research design should be formulated in such a way that it can be feasibly carried out by a single investigator within the time frame required by the Ph.D. program's policies.

### THE DISSERTATION CHAIR

Each Ph.D. candidate identifies a SSW faculty member to serve as their dissertation chair. It is the responsibility of the candidate to discuss their interests with the identified faculty member and ask that person to serve as their dissertation chair. Faculty members are free to decline the request to be a candidate's dissertation chair.

Candidates are not required to work with a previous advisor, research practicum mentor or specific faculty member. Candidates should select a dissertation chair whom they believe best fits with their interests and working style and who can provide mentorship in the areas they need assistance with most. In nearly all cases, the dissertation chair does not change during the dissertation process. In cases where there are significant concerns regarding the continuance of a faculty member in the role of dissertation chair, by either the faculty member or the candidate, a change may be warranted. The Director of the Ph.D. Program should be consulted in cases where a change in dissertation chair is sought.

The dissertation chair is responsible for leading the dissertation committee through all phases of the dissertation process. The chair must be a full-time SSW faculty member and have substantial familiarity with the Ph.D. program curriculum, understand the expectations regarding the level of required scholarship demonstrated in dissertation work, and a demonstrated record of recent, active research experience including publication in peer-reviewed journals. The chair is expected to provide regular mentorship, including timely feedback, to the Ph.D. candidate.

### THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Ph.D. candidate forms a dissertation committee in consultation with their advisor and the Director of the Ph.D. Program. Committee members should have substantive, theoretical, and methodological expertise related to the topic and be academically and professionally qualified to serve in a mentoring

and advising role. The proposed committee membership is submitted to the Director of the Ph.D. program using the Dissertation Committee form found in the Appendices, who will defer to the dissertation committee chair regarding the committee's composition unless the Director has serious concerns about the qualifications of the committee members.

Dissertation committees must have at least three committee members, two full-time SSW faculty members and at least one member outside of the SSW. Additional external committee members may be added to the committee as appropriate. All committee members must hold an earned Ph.D. and a demonstrated record of recent, active research experience including publication in peer-reviewed journals. External community-based experts are permitted to serve as advisory group members to a Ph.D. student and dissertation committee, however these experts are not permitted to be signatories on the dissertation proposal or dissertation. External committee members are required to complete an MOU affirming their willingness to serve on the committee. See the Appendices.

In nearly all cases, the dissertation committee composition remains the same during the dissertation process. In cases where there are significant concerns regarding the continuance of a committee member, by either the committee member, the chair, or the candidate, a change may be warranted. The Director of the Ph.D. Program should be consulted in cases where a change in committee membership is sought.

All committee members agree to advise the candidate; however, the chair retains the right of final approval of all dissertation materials. Committee members will make their own arrangements with candidates when they are on sabbatical or leave regarding how they will engage in the dissertation process. Committee members who are unable to participate during their sabbatical or leave period may be temporarily or permanently replaced on the committee if they are unable to participate as committee members during their sabbatical or leave and this is determined by the chair or Director of the Ph.D. program to hinder the candidate's ability to make adequate progress towards graduation.

## THE Ph.D. DISSERTATION

Within the context of the previously stated objectives, the specific topic area of the dissertation should develop out of and foster the intellectual and professional interests of the candidate. In selecting a topic and developing a research proposal plan, the student should be attentive to the following criteria:

- The topic must be in an area of significance to the field of social work.
- The dissertation must aim to develop new knowledge, address issues that have not been adequately empirically explored.
- The dissertation must be an independent project conducted by the student in the role of principal investigator. The proposed research must include independent conceptualization, development and execution of a scientific study.
- The dissertation must meet current standards for scientific rigor in its design and execution.

Dissertations may be quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods. Candidates who use non-publicly available secondary data sets should secure an MOU regarding data set use signed by the candidate, dissertation Chair, Director of the Ph.D. program, and the principal investigator responsible for the data set. Students seeking to use data held by their place of employment should consult with their Chair, the Ph.D. Program Director, and if needed, the Simmons IRB, regarding ethical considerations and constraints related to their dual roles as student and employee of the data holding organization. Upon approval of

the aforementioned, a data use agreement must be secured between the data holding organization, the student and Simmons University.

All dissertation research must be approved by the Simmons University Institutional Review Board prior to beginning the study. The student must be listed as the principal investigator on their dissertation study IRB application and the dissertation Chair serves as the university advisor overseeing the student's work signing the IRB form in that capacity. In cases where the dissertating student is using existing data collected by a different principal investigator, and is already listed on an IRB application, the student and Chair should consult the Ph.D. Program Director to clarify how the student's work will be supervised. In cases where data are actively held by another university under a current IRB approval, the student may obtain IRB approval through an Inter-Institutional Agreement made with the Simmons University Office of Sponsored Programs. In all cases, the student's dissertation work must be supervised by an eligible faculty member at Simmons SSW.

The IRB approval governing the dissertation study must be in current and in good standing throughout the dissertation process and at the time of the dissertation defense in order for a candidate to continue engaging in the study and using study data.

There are two options for the dissertation format: standard dissertation (Option A), or the three-paper dissertation (Option B). Outlines for these options can be found in the Appendices. Candidates should select a dissertation option in consultation with their dissertation committee chair.

Candidates are responsible for all aspects of their dissertation study including timely progression towards completion of the dissertation document. The dissertation committee Chair and members are responsible for providing timely feedback to the candidate. Candidate progress towards completion of the dissertation phase will be monitored by the Director of the Ph.D. program.

## THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL AND PROPOSAL HEARING

Candidates prepare a dissertation proposal in consultation with their dissertation Chair and committee. An outline for the dissertation proposal is found in the Appendices. The dissertation proposal must state the problem for study; summarize relevant theoretical and empirical literature; specify the expected contribution of the study; provide a detailed methodology of the study including plans for data analysis and state the relationship to the field of social work. The proposal may also include a completed IRB (Institutional Review Board) proposal and should identify any expected difficulties and explicit plans for solving them in the course of carrying out the dissertation research.

The dissertation committee Chair provides primary mentorship to the candidate in developing the dissertation proposal. Committee members should be consulted on proposal drafts prior to the dissertation proposal hearing to obtain feedback and recommendations. Candidates should expect their dissertation proposal to go through several draft iterations before it is ready for the proposal defense.

The dissertation committee Chair will set a date for the proposal hearing in consultation with the candidate and committee members. It is the candidate's responsibility to distribute the final proposal to all participants three weeks prior to the date of the proposal hearing. An electronic copy should also be sent to the Director of the Ph.D. Program prior to the hearing. If support staff are not available, it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure the Dissertation Proposal Hearing form is completed (see the Appendices), notify all potential SSW and committee participants of the time and date of the hearing, , prepare the forms required for the meeting, and reserve any technology required for the hearing.

At the proposal hearing, the candidate presents a summary of their proposal and the committee discusses any relevant concerns or recommendations based on the written proposal and presentation. The committee Chair leads the hearing. Required attendees at the proposal hearing include the candidate's dissertation committee. The Director of the Ph.D. Program may also attend ex officio. Guests may attend at the approval of the Chair. The SSW Director and College Dean may attend ex officio. In all cases, the Chair must be advised prior to the hearing if individuals other than the dissertation committee members plan to attend the hearing.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the committee must reach a unanimous decision regarding the proposal. The committee can approve the proposal without modification, approve with modification, or disapprove the proposal. A proposal approved without modification permits the candidate to begin dissertation work immediately. If a proposal is approved with modification, the committee Chair will prepare a written summary of required modifications for the candidate. The candidate must make these modifications and submit the revised proposal for review to the committee. The Chair will then query the committee to obtain their approval of the revised proposal. If the proposal revisions are not approved, further revision may be requested and this process repeated. All revisions must be made and approved within a 2-month period.

In the case where the committee disapproves the proposal, the candidate will be asked to revise the dissertation proposal within a specific timeline and repeat the dissertation proposal defense within a 6-month period. The committee has the same three options for a decision. In the situation where approval is not granted twice for a candidate's dissertation proposal, the candidate will be administratively withdrawn from the Ph.D. program.

When approved by the dissertation committee, the proposal becomes a formal agreement between the student, the committee, and the SSW regarding the work that will be completed in fulfillment of the dissertation requirement.

A copy of the full proposal and signed approval form must be submitted electronically to the Director of the Ph.D. program no more than 2 weeks after the hearing.

## THE DISSERTATION AND DISSERTATION DEFENSE

The dissertation must conform to the standards presented for Option A and Option B in the Appendices. The candidate is responsible for adherence to these standards. The dissertation committee Chair provides oversight of the candidate's dissertation work including adherence to these standards.

The dissertation must be independent work. The dissertation document must be independently written. Committee members may provide guidance to candidates on the dissertation work, but not directly collaborate.

The dissertation committee Chair provides primary mentorship to the candidate in developing the dissertation. Committee members should be consulted on the dissertation document prior to the dissertation hearing to obtain feedback and recommendations. Candidates should expect their dissertation document to go through several draft iterations before it is ready for the defense.

The Ph.D. candidate must complete all requirements for graduation prior to the dissertation defense.

The submission of the complete dissertation manuscript and the scheduling of the oral defense may take place when, in the judgment of the Chair and with the concurrence of the other committee members,

the document has reached the stage at which final acceptance is appropriate. It is the responsibility of the Chair to communicate with the other members of the committee in order to ensure that all members have an agreed consensus on the general acceptability of the document prior to the dissertation hearing.

The dissertation committee Chair will set a date for the dissertation hearing in consultation with the candidate and committee members. It is the candidate's responsibility to distribute the final dissertation to all participants three weeks prior to the date of the proposal hearing. An electronic copy should also be sent to the Director of the Ph.D. Program and the SSW Director prior to the hearing. It is the responsibility of the Chair to complete the Dissertation Hearing form (see the Appendices), notify all potential SSW participants of the time and place, prepare the forms required for the meeting, and reserve any technology required for the hearing.

This dissertation abstract, the candidate's bio, and names and titles of all dissertation committee members should be sent to the Director of the Ph.D. program who distributes an announcement about the hearing to the Ph.D. community.

At the dissertation defense, the candidate presents a summary of their dissertation and the committee discusses any relevant concerns or recommendations based on the written document and presentation. The committee Chair leads the hearing. Attendees at the dissertation hearing include the candidate's dissertation committee. The Director of the Ph.D. Program may also attend. Guests may attend at the approval of the Chair. The SSW Director and College Dean may attend ex officio. The wider SSW community may also be invited to attend the defense.

The defense consists of three components: an oral presentation, discussion and response to questions, and the decision of the committee regarding approval. The committee's options are: to approve the dissertation, to approve with specific modifications, or to withhold approval. In the first two cases the work of the committee is finished at this point and all members sign the signature approval form. Specific modifications that may be requested by the committee are reviewed and approved by the Chair. In the case where the committee withholds approval, the candidate will be asked to revise the dissertation within a specific timeline and repeat the dissertation defense within a 6-month period. The committee has the same three options for a decision. In the situation where approval is withheld twice for a candidate's dissertation, the candidate will be administratively withdrawn from the Ph.D. program.

A copy of the signed approval form must be submitted electronically to the Director of the Ph.D. program no more than 2 weeks after a hearing.

#### TIME FRAME FOR DISSERTATION AND GRADUATION

Simmons University graduation dates include January, May, August, and October. Candidates must notify their Chair, the Director of the Ph.D. Program, and the Registrar's office before they intend to graduate. Candidates must file an intent to graduate form with the Registrar's office.

Candidates must send an email to this address: [registrar@simmons.edu](mailto:registrar@simmons.edu) and request the petition to graduate form for the SSW and CSSPP.

Filing of this form must usually be done at least 2 months in advance for the May graduation date and 4 weeks in advance for the January, August, and October dates. Each graduation date has specific filing

deadlines and these are subject to change. Please check with the Registrar's office to confirm the submission date for the intent to graduate form.

Candidates are encouraged to complete their dissertation defense at least 6 weeks before graduation to make certain they meet the filing deadlines and allow time for any required revisions to the dissertation document. A student cannot graduate until the Director of the Ph.D. Program has verified receipt of a corrected and filed complete dissertation manuscript.

It is the candidate's responsibility to monitor the time table for submitting all required materials to graduate.

Candidates are not permitted to walk in graduation ceremonies until their dissertation is filed. Graduates eligible to participate in May doctoral hooding and commencement ceremonies include students who filed to graduate in the preceding August, October, January or May of the academic year.

#### DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

Final copies of all dissertation materials must be filed with the Ph.D. Director and the University Archives at least one week prior to graduation for the January, August, and October graduation dates and at least 4 weeks prior to the May graduation date.

The final copy of the dissertation must include an abstract, the full dissertation as approved by the dissertation committee including all appendices, and the signed signature approval form of the committee. The signed, signature approval form can be obtained from the Ph.D. program Director.

A final copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the [Simmons University Digital Archives](#) following these requirements: [requirements for submission of theses & dissertations](#). Submissions can be made here: [submit your work here](#). Materials to be submitted include:

- 1 digital copy of the work in PDF format
- an abstract
- a signed submission form

Questions about Archive submissions can be sent to: [archives@simmons.edu](mailto:archives@simmons.edu).

Candidates are encouraged to submit their dissertation to ProQuest.com so that a copyright can be obtained and your dissertation is indexed and archived in a ProQuest's dissertation repository - Dissertation & Thesis Global - a searchable database. Go to <https://about.proquest.com/en/dissertations/graduate-students/> for more information and to submit your dissertation.

Candidates are encouraged to submit their dissertation abstract to the NASW Press *Dissertation Abstracts* at: <https://naswpress.org/content/1439>. This is a searchable database of dissertations in social work.

The SSW does not disseminate Ph.D. dissertations.

## REQUIRED INFORMATION TO SUBMIT UPON GRADUATION

The SSW is required to submit certain demographic information about each Ph.D. student who graduates from the program to the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates. Prior to graduation, the Ph.D. Director will provide your name to the College administrator who manages the submission of this information and that person will request the needed information from you. This information is not provided to the Ph.D. program Director.

Prior to graduation, please provide the Ph.D. program Director with an email address or other contact information so that they may contact you if needed to follow up with any post-graduation information.

## AUTHORSHIP AND PUBLICATION OF STUDENT WORK

All Ph.D. students are encouraged to publish scholarly work and present scholarly presentations while they are in the program.

When students submit work where they are the principal investigator or the lead researcher or scholar on a project, they retain the right for first authorship on the paper or presentation. Students who submit a paper for publication or a presentation for a conference that stems from a course paper or other course work in a Ph.D. class, where they are the main author or project lead, retain the right of first authorship and are not required to offer authorship to the course instructor. In cases where students invite others to collaborate on their work, including faculty members, they should discuss authorship and author order prior to beginning the collaboration. Faculty members who provide technical assistance including guidance on research, editing, or other types of assistance should not assume authorship will be offered by a student if prior discussion has not been had regarding authorship before the faculty member provides the assistance.

Students retain the right of first authorship on all dissertation work. Students may invite committee members to co-author scholarly papers or presentations after the dissertation has been defended. In order to warrant authorship, committee members must demonstrate contribution to the dissertation-related publication in accordance with the *International Committee of Medical Journal Editors* authorship guidelines which have been recommended for adherence to by scientific journals by COPE, the International Committee on Publication Ethics.

ICMJE guidelines for inclusion as an author are:

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

In addition to being accountable for the parts of the work he or she has done, an author should be able to identify which co-authors are responsible for specific other parts of the work. In addition, authors should have confidence in the integrity of the contributions of their co-authors.

All those designated as authors should meet all four criteria for authorship, and all who meet the four criteria should be identified as authors. Those who do not meet all four criteria should be acknowledged.

See:

<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

## **REGISTRATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Students must maintain continuous registration in order to retain matriculation in the Ph.D. program. Registration schedules are disseminated to students each semester. If you have a registration question, please contact the Registrar's Office or the Ph.D. Program Director.

Students must register for at least 6 credits to be considered part-time or 9 credits to be considered full-time. Students who have completed coursework must continue to register for continuance for the Fall and Spring term until they have graduated.

### **COURSE SCHEDULES**

Ph.D. course schedules are posted for the academic year in the spring of the year prior. Course times are subject to change.

Faculty who are not teaching Ph.D. courses in the Summer term may not be fully available to Ph.D. students in the summer months for mentorship or advising. Students are responsible for working through summer scheduling plans with their mentor or advisor. In most cases, dissertation proposal hearings or dissertation defenses are not scheduled during June, July or August.

### **DROP/ADD A COURSE**

Prior to the start of classes and until the end of the second class, students may add or drop a class through the registration system. Students are responsible for informing the instructor and for making up any missed coursework in an added class. For courses dropped after week two, students must contact the Ph.D. Program Director to determine the correct procedure. Students may not add a class after the second-class meeting.

Students who change their schedule by dropping or adding a course should consult with their faculty advisor to ensure that they will continue to meet degree and graduation requirements. Students should meet with their faculty advisor and subsequently receive permission from both the faculty advisor and the Ph.D. Program Director when dropping or adding a class. Students should also consult with the Student Financial Services to be fully apprised of the impact of course changes on their financial aid.

## WITHDRAWAL FROM A COURSE

Ph.D. students must meet with the course instructor, their advisor, and the Ph.D. Program Director before withdrawing from a course in a Level 2 meeting.

Student transcripts will show a “W” grade for “withdrawn” for any courses withdrawn from after the 4th week and up to the end of the 8th week. No withdrawals are permitted after week 8; the instructor will record the grade the student has earned. Students are not allowed to withdraw from the same course more than once. Withdrawal deadlines are adjusted for summer term courses. Withdrawals after the 4th week count as “credits attempted” for purposes of the Federal SAP policy. Ph.D. students may withdraw from a maximum of 3 courses during their tenure in the program.

## AUDITS

Ph.D. students wishing to audit a course must speak with the Ph.D. Program Director and the course instructor to determine if an audit is permissible for that class. Course audits in SW Ph.D. courses are rare. Interested students must provide a strong rationale for auditing a course. To register, students must have permission of the SW Ph.D. Program Director and the course instructor. Factors related to audit consideration include among other things, class size and course structure. If permission is obtained, the student should contact the School of Social Work registration manager for Ph.D. students who will assist with enrollment.

Registration to audit a course in the SSW, may occur ONLY two weeks prior to the start of class, not before. Only one class may be audited per semester. The cost to audit is the equivalent of one credit tuition. Auditing students are typically exempt from submitting papers and exams, but are expected to attend all class sessions, complete the readings, and meet any additional requirements at the discretion of the instructor. The audit will appear on the student transcript; students receive no grade and no credit. Students may not register to audit a course in the SSW and then change the status from audit to enrolled. Instructors cannot approve an audit for which a student has not registered.

## COURSEWORK AND GRADING POLICIES

Please see the SSW Graduate Student Handbook for information on the following policies:

- *Religious Observance/Student Absence*
- *Extensions for Assignments*
- *Rewriting of Graded Papers*
- *Ethical Complaints and Grievances*
- *Voluntary and involuntary leaves of absence*

### ATTENDANCE

#### *Classroom Attendance*

Instructors are permitted to and will consider individual class attendance when determining a student's final grade for a course. In addition to lowering a grade, excessive absences may justify a failing grade for the entire course. At the SSW, "excessive absence" is typically defined as missing more than 20% of a course.

### PHD GRADING

Ph.D. grading consists of written and oral feedback. Students should expect critical review of their work as well as constructive feedback from instructors. Students who are unclear about written or oral feedback on assignments provided inside or outside of the classroom are encouraged to meet with instructors to clarify the feedback. Oral feedback within the classroom is considered formal feedback to students. Instructors may or may not use grading rubrics in their courses – this is at the discretion of the instructor. Ph.D. students are expected to demonstrate critical thinking skills, intellectual curiosity, and professionalism in their work.

Students are expected to maintain a B (3.0) grade average throughout the Ph.D. Program in the SSW. Courses are graded using the A-F grading system, however a grade of B- or lower is considered a failing grade. School of Social Work students must take all classes for a letter grade. The numerical equivalent for each grade is as follows:

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	GPA equivalent	100-point scale equivalent
A	4.0	100-94
A-	3.67	93-90
B+	3.33	89-87
B	3.0	86-84
B-	2.67	83-80

C+	2.33	79-77
C	2.00	76-74
C-	1.67	73-70
D+	1.33	69-68
D	1	67-64
D-	.67	63-60
F	0	59 or below

### *Non-Matriculation Grade Policy*

A non-matriculated student must receive a “B” or better in his or her first class to remain eligible to take a second class.

### COURSE EVALUATIONS

Each course is evaluated by students by the end of the last class meeting. The evaluations can be reviewed by the instructor only after student grades have been submitted. Evaluations are reviewed by the instructor, the Ph.D. Program Director and the Director of the School of Social Work.

### INCOMPLETE POLICY

Completion of coursework by the last day of the semester is essential. An instructor may use their discretion to grant an Incomplete when the majority of the course requirements and assignments have successfully been completed and when the student is unable to complete assignments due to extenuating circumstances. In permitting an Incomplete, the instructor must establish a completion date no later than three weeks from the last day of classes or by the first day of classes of the following semester (including summer)-whichever is earlier. The instructor must attach the student’s request to the Incomplete Form forwarded to the Ph.D. Program Director.

If the student completes the requirement(s) by the extension date, the mark of Incomplete will be changed to a letter grade. If not, the student will be assigned a grade based on the work completed to date. Grades not submitted by the Instructor to the Office of the Registrar by the approved deadline will automatically be converted to a grade of “F.”

Ph.D. Students will not be permitted to take the Comprehensive Exam if they have an outstanding mark of Incomplete in a course.

### TUTORING & WRITING CENTER RESOURCES

The Ph.D. program does not provide tutoring services to students to learn course material. Students may obtain a private tutor at their own expense if desired, however it must be clear to Ph.D. faculty that a student has completed work independently on their own.

Ph.D. students may use the services of the Writing Center at Simmons University, however these services are primarily designed for master's and undergraduate level students. Ph.D. students should be aware that guidance provided by Writing Center staff may not meet the standards for Ph.D. level work. Students may use editing services, however it must be clear to Ph.D. faculty that a student has completed work independently on their own.

## APPEAL OF FINAL COURSE GRADE

Students have the right to be awarded grades that are calculated correctly and assigned based on a fair evaluation of work. Students have the right to understand how a grade was calculated and why the faculty member evaluated the work as they did.

The School of Social Work is guided by the principles of academic freedom and respects the integrity, expertise, and professional judgment of its faculty in the evaluation of students' academic work. Faculty members' right and obligation to evaluate students' academic work and determine student grades are fundamental to this principle.

Faculty members have the right to set grading standards in their courses and the responsibility to advise students of their grading standards at the outset of the course; to use their best judgment in applying those standards; and to assign grades based on methods of evaluation they deem appropriate so long as those methods are not arbitrary or capricious or the product of prejudice or discriminatory animus.

Simmons faculty are strongly encouraged to advise students in writing of their grading methods and standards at the beginning of each term in each course they teach, preferably as part of the course syllabus. Students are encouraged to raise questions about how the instructor will calculate the final grade at the beginning of the semester.

### *Discussion with Instructor*

Students should talk to their instructor about any grade concerns or questions before initiating the Grade Appeal Process described below.

Within one week of the posting of the course grade, students should meet (or speak on the phone/email) with their instructor and express their concerns about their course grade, providing information the faculty member would need to reconsider the grade. If the faculty member agrees to change a grade, they will submit the changed grade to the Registrar. If, after the discussion, the faculty member decides to let the grade stand, a student may wish to initiate a formal grade appeal.

### *Basis of Grade Appeal*

Simmons formal grade appeal process addresses situations in which a student believes a grade has been assigned for one of the following reasons:

- Computational or clerical error;
- Arbitrariness or capriciousness (including where grading criteria have changed after assignment submission and without explanation)

If a student believes that one of these reasons applies to a grade they have received, they should follow the procedures and timelines outlined below.

Only the final grade in a course is subject to this process. As a result of the process, the final grade may be raised, lowered, or stay the same. No new or revised course work can be requested by the student or accepted by the faculty member as part of the grade appeal process.

## GRADE APPEAL PROCESS

### *Overview*

As noted above, before initiating a formal grade appeal, students are encouraged to meet with their faculty member and discuss their concerns and/or ask questions about the grade. Grade concerns are frequently resolved through these "informal" (i.e., before formal appeal) discussions, most often when there is a computational error. A grade appeal has two stages: to the Ph.D. Program Director and to the Director of the School of Social Work.

Appeals must be submitted within 1 week of posting of the grade in Workday which is the subject of the appeal. At each level of appeal, a denial of the appeal means that the grade will not be reviewed or changed. Granting of an appeal may mean the final grade may be raised, lowered, or stay the same.

### *Process and Deadlines*

If the student's discussion with the instructor has not reached a satisfactory conclusion, the following process and timeline are to be followed for a formal grade appeal:

#### Step 1: Appeal to the Director of the Ph.D. Program

If, after receiving the faculty member's determination (as described above), the student continues to dispute the accuracy of the final grade and wishes to continue the grade appeal process, the student may submit the formal Grade Appeal petition, using the grade appeal form which can be requested through the SSW Director of Student Support. As part of the Grade Appeal petition, the student must provide a written statement that includes the student's reasons for appealing the grade, all supporting course materials, and any other supporting materials. The Ph.D. Program Director, or their designee, shall review the Grade Appeal petition and attendant materials.

As part of their review, the Ph.D. Program Director or designee may meet with the student, faculty member, and/or other relevant faculty, staff, or administrators, and may request the submission of additional supporting materials. If the program director, or designee's, review determines that there is no merit to the grade appeal, they will inform the student that the final grade stands. If they agree that the grade should be changed, they complete a "Change of Grade" form, including a clear explanation of the reason for the change that is consistent with the terms of this grade appeal policy, and submit the "Change of Grade" form to the Director of Student Support and the Registrar.

Deadlines: The student must submit an appeal to the Program Director, or their designee, within seven calendar days after the decision in the "First Step" above is issued to the student.

### Step 2: Appeal to the Director of the School of Social Work.

If the student is not satisfied with the response of the Director of the Ph.D. program, the student may appeal that decision to the Director of the School of Social Work (or the Director's designee). The Grade Appeal Form, faculty response, and Ph.D. Program Director's outcome determination are then forwarded to the Director of the School of Social Work

The Director of the SSW will decide whether the appeal should move to the next stage. If the appeal is granted, the Director will appoint a 3-person faculty panel comprised of SW Ph.D. teaching faculty to review the appeal and related information. The panel may seek additional information from the student and/or the instructor. The panel will forward a decision to the Director of the SSW, who will inform the instructor and student of the outcome and, if the appeal results in a change of grade, complete and submit the change of grade to the Registrar.

The grade appeal policy respects the privacy of students and faculty. All parties are responsible for maintaining confidentiality.

Deadlines: The student must submit an appeal to the SSW Director, or designee, within seven calendar days after the decision in the "Second Step" above issued to the student.

## **MAINTENANCE OF ACADEMIC STANDING**

### **REQUIRED COURSE GRADES OF B- OR BELOW**

Any student earning a grade of B- or lower in a required course is required to have a Level 2 review no later than the first day of the subsequent term. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the grade, the reasons for the low academic performance, and to develop an Improvement Plan, which will be sent to the student. A student's failure to attend this meeting will result in the administrative withdrawal of the student's registration.

If the earned grade is a B- or below, the student will be required to retake the class. Students required to retake a class will do so at their own expense.

Students who earn a second grade of B- or below are administratively dismissed from the Ph.D. program without a Level 2 review.

### **WHEN A STUDENT IS REQUIRED TO RETAKE A CLASS**

As part of an Improvement Plan, a student may be required to retake a course and to achieve a grade of B or better. In such cases, both grades remain on the transcript and are accounted for in the GPA. All students are required to earn the requisite number of unique degree credits to graduate. A student is allowed to repeat a maximum of one course in which they have earned a B- or below. The same course cannot be taken more than twice.

Students who are required to retake a course must repeat that same course at the SSW. Students should be aware that not all Ph.D. courses are offered annually. Repeating a course will very likely extend the time to complete core course requirements in the Ph.D. program.

Students must retake and pass all courses prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

#### ACADEMIC PROBATION

Poor academic performance is grounds for a student to be placed on academic probation. For the purposes of academic probation, poor performance is defined as: one grade below a B, and/or a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0. A student on academic probation will have a Level 2 review no later than the end of the first week of class of the subsequent semester. The purpose of the meeting is to develop an Improvement Plan. A copy of the plan must be forwarded to the student, the advisor, and the Director of the Ph.D. program. A student's failure to attend a Level 2 review meeting and to follow the Improvement Plan will result in the administrative withdrawal of the student's registration.

#### REMOVAL FROM ACADEMIC PROBATION

To be removed from academic probation, a student must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher by the end of the following term and/or earn a grade of B or better in a course that the student is required to repeat. A student will be informed by the Ph.D. Program Director when they are removed from academic probation.

#### COMPREHENSIVE EXAM: FAILING GRADE

If a student fails the comprehensive exam, they will have only one additional opportunity to retake it within one year. The date of the second exam will be determined by the Ph.D. Program Director in consultation with the student and the Ph.D. Committee. Failure to pass the exam after the second attempt will result in administrative dismissal from the program. If dismissed from the program, the student will be notified of the decision orally and in writing by the Director of the Ph.D. Program. Students have the right to follow the GRADE APPEAL PROCESS for the comprehensive exam as delineated above.

#### TIMELY PROGRESS IN THE PROGRAM

##### *Program Time Constraints*

The program is structured for completion within 4-6 years for full-time students, 4-8 years for part-time students, except in unusual circumstances. The student must graduate from the Ph.D. Program within 10 years of their matriculation start date. Students may appeal to the Director of the Ph.D. Program for an extension. The Director will consult with the Ph.D. Committee regarding the granting of an extension. If granted an extension, a Level 2 meeting will be convened and a timeline for completion of the program put in place.

If the student does not request an extension or is unable to meet the timeline requirements laid out in the Level 2 meeting, the student will be administratively dismissed from the program. A student is not able to appeal this termination.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE DISMISSAL FROM THE Ph.D. PROGRAM

A student is allowed to repeat a maximum of one course in which he/she has earned a grade of B- or below. The same course cannot be enrolled in more than twice. Students who earn a second grade of B- or below in that course will be dismissed from the program. Students are not allowed to withdraw from the same course more than once.

Two grades of B- or below will lead to automatic administrative dismissal.

Students who do not register for classes or continuance credits in consecutive semesters (excluding summer semester) and are not on an official leave, or have not officially withdrawn, will be administratively withdrawn by Simmons. A new admissions application is required to be considered for return to the active student status.

#### WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Students who withdraw from Simmons should first meet with the Ph.D. Program Director prior to submitting withdrawal forms to the Registrar. Ph.D. students who voluntarily withdraw must meet with the Director of the Ph.D. Program for an exit interview as part of the withdrawal process. Students who withdraw from the Ph.D. program and who wish to seek re-admission at some later time, must apply for readmission through the standard admissions process applicable to all candidates. Admissions once does not guarantee admissions a second time. Recipients of financial aid should also notify the Office of Student Financial Services of their withdrawal.

#### Federal Student Academic Progress Policy

To be eligible to continue to receive Federal Student Aid (FSA), students must make satisfactory academic progress toward achieving and completing their program of study through measurement of qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (completed credits) standards. The full SAP policy can be found on the Student Financial Services website and should be read to understand how and when this is evaluated.

#### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

School of Social Work Ph.D. students are expected to abide by their respective profession's standards for ethical practice as well as the NASW Code of Ethics. Ph.D. students are required to abide by commonly held standards of scientific integrity including publication and authorship standards as well as standards for engagement with human subject research.

### *GPA Required for Graduation*

Students must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 to be eligible for graduation.

### ACADEMIC AND CONDUCT ISSUES LEADING TO DISMISSAL

Ph.D. students will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program due to academic performance. The following circumstances lead to dismissal:

- Earning a single semester cumulative GPA that falls below a 3.0 for two consecutive semesters
- When it is determined at the end of a semester that a student cannot return their overall cumulative GPA in the Ph.D. program to at least a 3.0 at the conclusion of the following semester
- Earning two grades of B- or below in a course
- Failure to progress through the Ph.D. program in a timely manner as described in this Handbook.

### CONDUCT ISSUES LEADING TO DISMISSAL

- Behavior judged to be in violation of Simmons University Policies
- For Social Work Students: Behavior that is deemed unprofessional per the NASW Code of Ethics and the Simmons School of Social Work Standards of Professional Practice
- Any threat or attempt to harm someone else inside or outside of the Simmons community
- Commission of a criminal act that is contrary to professional practice, occurring during the course of study at Simmons or occurring prior to admission to the School of Social Work and becoming known after admissions
- Behaviors and actions judged to be in violation of human subject protocols and/or IRB ethical standards as articulated by the Simmons University Institutional Review Board.
- Behaviors and actions judged to be in violation of commonly held scientific ethical standards.

### NOTIFICATION OF DISMISSAL

A student who is dismissed will be informed in a letter from the Director of the Ph.D. Program or designee. The reasons for the dismissal will be outlined in the letter.

### APPEAL OF DISMISSAL

The student may appeal the decision, in writing, to the School of Social Work Director. A written appeal must be received within seven (7) days of the date of the letter from the School of Social Work Ph.D. Program Director or designee. This appeal does not constitute a new review process. Rather, it is a request from a student to have the Director review the original record of the dismissal on either one or more of the following three grounds: (1) one or more errors in the dismissal process; or (2) new evidence or information material to the case that was not available at the time of the dismissal process; or (3) a substantive error occurred because the decision maker misinterpreted evidence used in the dismissal

process. The appeal letter should include an explanation regarding the grounds for appeal and should reference one or more of the three grounds for appeal listed in this policy. The student shall provide the SSW Director all documentation necessary for the appeal to be considered. The SSW Director will respond to the student appeal within 10 business days of its receipt. The decision of the SSW Director is final.

## STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### *Professional Standards and Policy for Professional Performance*

- Please see the SSW Graduate Student Handbook for more information about requirements related to the NASW Code of Ethics and Simmons SSW Standards for Professional Practice Policy

### Commonly Held Scientific Ethical Standards

Ethical guidelines for research can be found on the Simmons IRB website. In addition, below are guidelines for scientific ethical standards that provide guidance:

- World Health Organization: Ethical Standards and procedures for research with human beings:  
<https://www.who.int/ethics/research/en/>
- National Institutes of Health: Ethics in Clinical Research:  
<https://www.cc.nih.gov/recruit/ethics.html>  
Congressional Research Service - Use of AI in research and data analysis  
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47569>

### Simmons University Academic Integrity Policy

Students are required to abide by the Simmons University Academic Integrity Policy found [here](#), which includes the University's guidelines pertaining to plagiarism, cheating, and inappropriate use of AI technology. Specifically, each student is responsible for presenting work of their own creation and refraining from presenting others' work as their own creation. Cheating and plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are considered an academic integrity violation. In situations where cheating or plagiarism is suspected, the faculty person informs the Ph.D. Program Director and schedules an individual meeting with the student to discuss the possible infraction and consequences. The Ph.D. Program Director is informed of the meeting's outcome. In serious situations, at the discretion of the Ph.D. Program Director the student can be referred to the director of academic integrity at Simmons University. Please note that PhD students are strongly discouraged from using AI technology to analyze qualitative data and absolutely prohibited from doing so without participant consent (i.e., explicit explanation in the informed consent form regarding the use of AI in data analysis AND all risks to participants).

## POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE ISSUES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The SSW is committed to supporting student success and the achievement of academic and practice proficiency while also upholding professional standards and the expectations set forth by the university-wide code of conduct. A three-level review process is used to address student academic performance and professional conduct issues. The specific level of review depends upon the severity of the concern. Information shared by the student with faculty and school administrators related to the concerns being reviewed will not be treated as confidential if the information shared raises concerns about professional performance or student safety. Students are advised that faculty or administrators will share pertinent information with each other on a need to know basis for the purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about those issues and concerns. A student will be reviewed at the level (1, 2 or 3) that is appropriate to the concern.

Reviews of students can occur for the following reasons:

- To identify need for academic support
- To determine a remediation plan for an Honor Board violation
- If a student fails to meet or maintain academic requirements
- If a student is terminated from a teaching or research practicum due to performance issues
- If a student exhibits behavior judged by faculty to be in violation of professional ethics and/or Simmons University and/or SSW policies and/or commonly held scientific ethical standards
- If a student exhibits consistent pattern of unprofessional behavior in the classroom, in practicums, or in the dissertation phase of the program

### *The Three Levels of Review*

In the SSW, there are three levels of review to address student academic performance and conduct issues. A student can be reviewed at any level, and consecutive level review is not required. Specifically, a student may have undergone a Level 1 review and then may be asked to engage in a Level 3 review, without having engaged in Level 2 review.

#### Level 1

A Level 1 review involves a consultation between a faculty member and a student, typically at the request of the faculty member. When a faculty member has concerns about a student meeting any of the academic criteria, whether related to professional behavior or academic performance, that faculty member will:

- Discuss those concerns directly with the student and seek to work with the student to resolve the difficulties.
- Apprise the Ph.D. Program Director or the student's advisor of the concerns
- Summarize plans and or recommendations in an email to the student

The purpose of the Level 1 review is to provide the student an opportunity to receive feedback from their instructor about areas of concern and suggestions for addressing the concerns.

The outcome of many Level 1 consultations is that, together, the faculty and students resolve the concerns and no further reviews are desired or required. Examples of situations triggering a Level 1 review are attendance issues, a poor grade or missed assignment.

### Level 2

A Level 2 meeting can be convened when concerns have not been resolved at Level 1 or when a student appears to be developing a pattern of not following academic or program standards, policies, or procedures. All students on academic probation will have a Level 2 review meeting.

A Level 2 review usually involves a meeting with the appropriate faculty member, student, and Ph.D. Program Director, Director of the School of Social Work, and the student's faculty advisor.

The student will be informed of the Level 2 review by their faculty advisor or their instructor. In preparation for the Level 2 meeting, the Ph.D. Program Director will gather information about the nature of the concern. The meeting will be used to discuss the concerns and to develop an Improvement Plan to address that concern. If the outcome of the meeting is that no further action is needed, the meeting will be documented to the student and the program director but no Improvement Plan will be created. When an Improvement Plan is determined to be an appropriate next step, the Improvement Plan may address the need for the student to modify his or her behavior and/or seek appropriate help or academic assistance. All parties to the Level 2 meeting, including the student, shall receive a copy of the Improvement Plan.

The purpose of a Level 2 review is to assist students in fully understanding and addressing the academic or behavioral concerns that are negatively impacting their success in the program. Examples of issues that may lead to a Level 2 review are repeated attendance problems, poor grades, other difficulties meeting the standards and expectations of a course.

The Ph.D. Program Director may consult with the Director of the School of Social Work to determine if the Level 2 assessment is sufficient or whether it would be in the Student's and Simmons's best interests to conduct a more comprehensive review, pursuant to Level 3.

### Level 3

A Level 3 review involves the Director of the School of Social Work and the Ph.D. Program Director, members of the Academic Standards Committee and the student. Generally, the Level 3 review is called when serious or complex problematic patterns are identified with students or when the issues are serious enough to require formal consultation with faculty and the student. The Director for the School of Social Work, in consultation with the committee, decides whether or not a Level 3 meeting shall be convened. The Director informs the Director of Academic Integrity or appropriate University office about the decision to convene a Level 3 review.

A Level 3 review may be conducted when concerns have not been fully resolved at prior Level 1 or Level 2 meetings; when a student continues to not meet the criteria for academic performance or when a student exhibits unprofessional or unethical behaviors in a classroom or other academic setting.

When a Level 3 review is called, the Director for the School of Social Work will convene a meeting with the appropriate faculty, the Ph.D. Program Director, the student, and the student's faculty advisor.

Information will be provided by the student and by appropriate faculty to determine the nature of the problem and to identify alternatives for its remediation.

The student will be notified in writing of the concerns and meeting date by the Director, with sufficient time to prepare for and attend the meeting. If a student chooses not to attend, a finding can be made with the available information in the student's absence.

Once an understanding has been reached, the student will be excused from the meeting. Faculty conducting the Level 3 review will confer and agree on recommendations, which will then be made to the Director who will implement a course of action based on the recommendations.

The Director or designee will inform the student of the decision, which can include one of the following:

- Continue the student in the program with no conditions.
- Establish written conditions for the student's continuance in the program.
- Consult with or referral to the Office of Academic Integrity
- Dismiss student from the program

In any Level 3 review, there must be clear, concise documentation of the problem areas as well as verification that the concerns have been discussed with the student and attempted to be ameliorated when appropriate.

### *Level 3 Reviews and Referral and/or Consultation with the Simmons University Office of Academic Integrity*

In some instances, depending on the nature of the issue, the Office of Academic Integrity may be consulted to determine whether a Level 3 Review or a referral for a Code of Conduct or Academic Integrity violation is required.

After consultation, the student will be notified in writing that the referral is taking place. Situations that may result in referral include: academic dishonesty, ethical violation, plagiarism, cheating, gender-based misconduct (which includes unlawful harassment), damage or destruction of University property, and conduct that endangers the health or safety of any University student, employee, campus visitor or member of the Simmons community and conduct that disrupts the functioning of the University as an open, educational community.

Students who are referred for Academic Integrity violations or Code of Conduct Violations may be referred back to the SSW Director for the purpose of developing an implementation of the sanctions. The Director may consult with the Office of Academic Integrity for guidance in the sanctions implementation plan.

## **ADDITIONAL POLICY INFORMATION**

### **TUITION REFUND**

Please consult the Student Financial Services representatives or see online at

<http://www.simmons.edu/admission-and-financial-aid/student-financial-services/student-accounts/courses-refunds> for the exact dates for all semesters and a description of the financial implications. Please note: The schedule differs from semester to semester.

## HEALTH INSURANCE WHILE IN SCHOOL

Please check the Simmons University website for detailed information about the student health insurance policy.

State Requirements: Massachusetts law requires all students registered for 3/4 time or more to carry health insurance. Students may be covered by individual or family coverage, or may participate in the University's Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) offered through University Health Plans and provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts.

To ensure compliance with the law, all undergraduate and graduate students registered for nine credits or more are enrolled in and billed for the school plan at the beginning of the academic year. Although students wishing to be covered by the plan will be enrolled automatically (after the allowable waiver period is over), to avoid any interim coverage issues between the beginning of the plan year on August 15, and the time the automatic enrollment lists are sent by the University to Blue Cross in mid-September, students should fill out the enrollment form online. Even if students are currently enrolled in the plan, they will get their new insurance card more quickly if they enroll online.

Students wishing to substitute other individual or family coverage for the school plan must demonstrate comparable coverage by filing a waiver online or at the Student Financial Services' office at the beginning of the academic year.

It is the policy of the University that all international students be enrolled in the school plan to ensure accessible coverage.

The law does not allow out-of-state Medicaid coverage as comparable insurance, although MassHealth qualifies. School insurance coverage is also available to students entering in January or the summer.

Part-time students and dependents are not eligible for the University's Student Health Insurance Plan. Part-time students and dependents should investigate market-rate plans and subsidized plans offered through the Massachusetts Health Connector ([www.mahealthconnector.org](http://www.mahealthconnector.org)). Non-degree students of higher education are required to be covered by health insurance for the twelve months following September 1, or from the date of enrollment.

## OTHER SIMMONS UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Please see the SSW Graduate Student Handbook and/or link for information on the following policies:

- The Simmons Commitment To Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
  - [Diversity and Inclusion Mission and Principles](#)
  - [Notice of Non-discrimination](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and Reporting information

- [Reporting Ethical Complaints and Grievances](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)

### Grievance Procedure

A written complaint alleging violation of the federal sex and disability discrimination laws and/or regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106 and 45 C.F.R. Part 86, implementing Title IX; 34 C.F.R. Part 104 and 45 C.F.R. Part 84, implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; and 45 C.F.R. Part 83, implementing Section 855 of the Public Health Service Act) may be filed with the University by any student, employee, or other aggrieved person. Complaints under this procedure will not be processed from applicants for employment or admission. A University employee's allegation that they have been subjected to discrimination prohibited by the regulations will be processed under the relevant employee grievance procedure. Inquiries concerning the application of non-discrimination policies may also be directed to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 330 C Street, Washington, DC 20202.

Information on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) can be found at <http://www.simmons.edu/academics/registrar/resources/student-record-privacy>.

Please visit <http://www.simmons.edu/student-life/handbook/> for University Policies on the following topics:

- Prohibited Conduct
- Judicial System
- University Policies & Procedures
- Residence Hall Policies and Procedures
- Policies about your use of Technology
- Notice of Non-Discrimination and Grievance Procedures
- Students with Disabilities
- Hazing Policy
- Gender-based Misconduct Policy
- Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement
- Policy on Valuing Diversity
- CORI Report and Crime Statistics

For more information about required forms, procedures, and processes related to the Ph.D. curriculum not specified in this Handbook, students should consult with their faculty advisor or the Ph.D. Program Director. Simmons University and School of Social Work policies are subject to change, please consult the University website for the most updated information on institutional policies.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Independent Study Form

Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program  
Independent Study Proposal

Ph.D. students should complete and submit this form for approval to their advisor and the Ph.D. Program Director prior to registering for the independent study.

Date:

Student name:

Independent Study Instructor:

Student's Advisor:

Number of credit hours:

Semester of registration:

Brief description of the focus of the independent study:

Specific learning objectives:

Method of student evaluation:

Meeting schedule of student and instructor:

Student Advisor:

Advisor signature of approval/date:

Ph.D. Program Director signature/date:

## **Appendix B: Teaching Practicum Proposal**

Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program

Ph.D. Teaching Practicum Proposal

A teaching practicum is required for all students. Students register for the 3-credit teaching practicum course SW 691, concurrent with their teaching practicum experience. Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of teaching-related activities. Students design their practicum experience in coordination with the faculty member who serves as their mentor. Options for the teaching practicum include co-teaching, course design and development, and other activities. Students must participate in a mentored-teaching experience for this course. Teaching practicums must be completed at Simmons University.

In rare cases, a research practicum may need to be extended or repeated if it is determined by the practicum mentor or the Ph.D. Program Director that the 100 hours requirement was not met or that the student performed below expected standards in their practicum work.

Date:

Student name:

Student's Advisor:

Teaching practicum mentor:

Email:

Phone:

Practicum start and end date:

Brief description of the focus of the practicum:

Specific learning objectives:

Specific activities to be engaged in:

Meeting schedule of student and mentor:

Student signature/date:

Teaching practicum mentor signature/date:

Ph.D. Program Director signature/date:

## Appendix C: Research Practicum Proposal

### Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program

#### Ph.D. Research Practicum Proposal

A research practicum is required for all students. Students register for the 3-credit research practicum course - SW 690 concurrent with their research practicum experience. Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of research-related activities. Students design their practicum experience in coordination with the faculty member they select as a research mentor. Options for a research practicum include:

Option A: Students may identify and affiliate with ongoing funded research projects relevant to social work internal or external to Simmons University. The student must identify a dedicated research mentor who holds an earned Ph.D. for their practicum work and obtain agreement from their advisor or Ph.D. Program Director to serve as the liaison for the Ph.D. program to that research mentor.

Option B: Members of the SSW faculty who hold an earned doctorate may offer the opportunity to one or more selected Ph.D. students to participate in a specific piece of faculty-directed research.

Option C: Any student or group of students may propose a student-generated research project provided that the student(s) is able to recruit a faculty member with an earned doctorate to supervise the project.

Students' involvement in any of these options should not be limited to one role, task, or activity (e.g., coding only, or interviewing only), but should allow students to become acquainted with both the substance and the processes of the research.

A written proposal is submitted to the faculty advisor and Ph.D. Program Director, describing the following content below. A report on the research practicum is submitted at the completion of the practicum describing the work done and activities engaged in, how learning objectives were met, and reflections on the practicum experience. The research mentor will also submit a brief statement evaluating the student's performance in the practicum.

In rare cases, a research practicum may need to be extended or repeated if it is determined by the practicum mentor or the Ph.D. Program Director that the 100 hours requirement was not met or that the student performed below expected standards in their practicum work.

## **Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program**

### **Ph.D. Research Practicum Proposal and MOU**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets forth the terms and understanding between the Simmons University School of Social Work (SSW) Ph.D. Program and (name) to serve in the role as a research mentor for (student's name) research practicum. It is a non-binding agreement executed for the purpose of establishing shared understanding of the role and activities the research mentor agrees to provide and support the Ph.D. student in throughout the research practicum. All parties agree to abide by the guidelines of research ethics and publication as outlined in the Ph.D. Handbook.

Date:

Student name:

Student's Advisor:

Research practicum mentor:

Institutional affiliation:

Email:

Phone:

Practicum start and end date:

Brief description of the focus of the practicum:

Specific learning objectives:

Specific activities to be engaged in:

Meeting schedule of student and mentor:

Student signature/date:

Research practicum mentor signature/date:

Ph.D. Program Director signature/date:

## **Appendix D: Submission of the Publishable Paper Form**

### Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program Publishable Paper Submission Verification

Student's Name:

Date the paper was submitted to the journal:

Name of the peer-reviewed journal submitted to:

Title of the manuscript:

Additional information (if needed)::

Student's signature:

Date:

Advisor's signature:

Date:

Ph.D. Program Director's signature:

Date:

NOTE: A copy of the email verification of the manuscript submission and the manuscript must be attached to this form.

**Appendix E: Comprehensive Exam Form**  
Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program  
Comprehensive Examination Status

Student's Name:

Date of the exam:

- Student passed the comprehensive examination.
- Student did not pass the comprehensive examination.

Comments:

Program Director's Name:

Program Director's Signature:

Date:

Date the exam was retaken: \_\_\_\_\_

- Student retook and passed the comprehensive examination.
- Student retook and did not pass the comprehensive examination.

Comments:

Program Director's Name:

Program Director's Signature:

Date:

## Appendix F: Dissertation Committee Establishment Form

*Completed once a committee is formed*

### Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program Dissertation Committee Agreement – Proposal Development

The below signed have agreed to serve as members of the Dissertation Committee for the listed Ph.D. candidate. In these roles, the Chair and Committee Members agree to provide timely and relevant feedback to the Ph.D. candidate in the preparation of the Dissertation Proposal as outlined in the SSW Ph.D. Student Handbook. The Ph.D. candidate agrees to provide Dissertation Proposal materials and responses to the Dissertation Committee's feedback in a timely manner as outlined in the SSW Ph.D. Student Handbook. The proposed timeline for development of the Dissertation Proposal is listed on this form.

#### **Ph.D. Candidate:**

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Proposed Dissertation Title:

#### **Proposed timeline milestones:**

Estimated date of first  
draft submitted:

Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated date of  
proposal defense:

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Committee Members**

##### **Committee Chair:**

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Signature:

Date:

**SSW Committee Member:**

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Signature:

Date:

**External Committee Member:**

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Signature:

Date:

Received by:

Ph.D. Program Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## **Appendix G: External Dissertation Committee Member MOU**

Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program  
Memorandum of Understanding: External Dissertation Committee Member  
Between Simmons University School of Social Work Ph.D. Program

and

(Committee Member)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets forth the terms and understanding between the Simmons University School of Social Work (SSW) Ph.D. Program and (name) to serve in the role as a committee member on (student's name) Ph.D. dissertation. It is a non-binding agreement executed for the purpose of establishing a shared understanding of the role and activities of the external dissertation committee members and the role and activities of the SSW throughout the time the dissertation committee is in effect.

### **Purpose**

This MOU will serve as formal recognition of the appointment of (committee member) to the dissertation committee of (student name).

As a committee member, the following activities will be required:

- Reading of dissertation proposal and dissertation documents in a timely manner
- Provision of constructive and timely feedback to the Ph.D. candidate
- Participation in the dissertation proposal defense and dissertation defense
- Occasional communication with the Ph.D. committee

The Ph.D. program, through the Chair of the Committee, will undertake the following activities:

- Provide primary guidance and mentorship to the Ph.D. candidate
- Engage in regular communications with all committee members
- Coordinate dissertation committee meetings

Should any questions, challenges, or problems arise in the dissertation proposal development or dissertation paper process the Dissertation Chair will serve as the first point of contact for the external committee member.

This MOU is in effect from the time of signature through the dissertation proposal defense date of the below candidate. If for any reason, there is a need to resign from the dissertation committee or adjust the committee member's role or participation, the committee member should alert the Dissertation Chair as soon as feasible.

**External Committee Member**

Name  
Position  
University/Employer  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

**Simmons University Committee Chair**

Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

**Simmons University Ph.D. Program Director**

Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

**Ph.D. Candidate:**

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Preliminary Dissertation Title:

**Proposed timeline milestones:**

Estimated date of first  
draft submitted: Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated date of  
dissertation defense: Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix H: Standard Dissertation: Option A**

### **Option A: Standard Dissertation General Outline**

1. Signed dissertation approval document (included in final submission)
2. Title page (see below)
3. Abstract (300 words maximum)
4. Introduction
  - a. Background to the problem/issue
  - b. Aims of the study
  - c. Significance of the study
5. Conceptual Framework for the Study
  - a. Theories that inform the conceptual framework of the study
  - b. Key concepts and/or domains
6. Literature review
  - a. Current literature informing the study
  - b. Identification of the knowledge gap/rationale for study
7. Methodology
  - a. Research aims/questions
  - b. Overall research approach
  - c. Research location or sites
  - d. Sample population and sampling strategy
  - e. Measures, instruments and/or sources of data
  - f. Data collection procedures
  - g. Data analysis procedures
  - h. Issues of validity/reliability and/or trustworthiness/credibility
8. Results/Findings
  - a. Detailed presentation of findings
  - b. Summary of findings
9. Discussion
  - a. Interpretation of study findings in relation to
  - b. Existing literature
  - c. Theory
  - d. Identification of new knowledge from the study
10. Study limitations
11. Conclusion
12. References

Title page example:

Title of the Dissertation

Name of the Student

Date of final submission

Ph.D. Committee Members

Name, Chair

Name, title

Name, title

School of Social Work

Simmons University

This dissertation is completed in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in Social Work

## **Appendix I: Three Paper Dissertation: Option B**

### **Option B: Three Paper Dissertation General Outline**

1. Signed dissertation approval document (included in final submission)
2. Title page
3. Abstract (300 words maximum)
4. Introduction
  - a. Background to the problem/issue
  - b. Aims of the overall study
  - c. Focus of each individual paper
  - d. Significance of the study overall and the contribution each paper will make
5. Conceptual Framework for the Study
  - a. Overarching conceptual framework for the study
  - b. Theories that inform conceptual frame of the study and individual papers
  - c. Key concepts and/or domains overall and in each individual paper
6. Paper 1 (should contain all of the elements of Option A, but within 20-page format)
7. Paper 2 (should contain all of the elements of Option A, but within 20-page format)
8. Paper 3 (should contain all of the elements of Option A, but within 20-page format)
9. Brief Discussion
  - a. Interpretation of study findings in relation to
    - i. Existing literature
    - ii. Theory
    - iii. Identification of new knowledge from the study overall
10. Recap of study limitations
11. Conclusion
12. References

Title page example:

Title of the Dissertation

Name of the Student

Date of final submission

Ph.D. Committee Members

Name, Chair

Name, title

Name, title

School of Social Work

Simmons University

This dissertation is completed in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in Social Work

## **Appendix J: Dissertation Proposal Outline**

### **The Dissertation Proposal Outline**

1. Signed dissertation approval document (included in final submission)
2. Title page
3. Abstract
4. Introduction
  - a. Background to the problem/issue
  - b. Aims of the study
  - c. Significance of the study
5. Conceptual Framework for the Study
  - a. Theories that inform the conceptual framework of the study
  - b. Key concepts and/or domains
6. Literature review
  - a. Current literature informing the study
  - b. Identification of the knowledge gap/rationale for study
7. Methodology
  - a. Research aims/questions
  - b. Overall research approach
  - c. Research location or sites
  - d. Sample population and sampling strategy
  - e. Measures, instruments and/or sources of data
  - f. Data collection procedures
  - g. Data analysis procedures
  - h. Presentation of pilot data or preliminary research
  - i. Issues of validity/reliability and/or trustworthiness/credibility
8. Study limitations
9. Current IRB status
10. Timetable
11. Conclusion
12. References
13. Appendices
  - a. Data collection instruments
  - b. IRB approval documents
14. Other relevant materials

**Appendix K: Dissertation Proposal Approval Form**

Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program  
Dissertation Proposal Approval – Advance to Dissertation

The below signed Dissertation Committee Members have reviewed and approved the dissertation proposal by the Ph.D. candidate listed below and agree that the candidate can proceed with the dissertation study outlined within it.

**Ph.D. Candidate:**

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Dissertation Proposal Title:

**Proposed timeline milestones:**

Estimated date of first  
draft submitted:

Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated date of  
dissertation defense:

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Members**

**Committee Chair:**

Title:

Signature:

Date:

**SSW Committee Member:**

Title:

Signature:

Date:

**External Committee Member:**

Title:

Signature:

Date:

Title:

Received by:

Ph.D. Program Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Appendix L: Dissertation Defense Information Form

Simmons School of Social Work Ph.D. Program  
Dissertation Defense Committee Information

Please type committee names and academic degrees, and licenses as they should appear on official documents. CV required for all outside readers, if applicable.

### Ph.D. Candidate

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Dissertation title:

### Dissertation defense

Date:

Time:

Location:

Media required:

Parking tickets required:

**Candidate brief bio** (paste here)

### Committee Members

Dissertation Committee Chair:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Simmons SSW Committee Member:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

External Committee Member:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Dissertation Committee Chair Signature:

Date:

**Appendix M: Dissertation Approval Signature Page**

The Ph.D. Dissertation of (student name) entitled

*(Title of Dissertation Proposal)*

has been approved by the candidate's dissertation committee of Simmons University School of Social Work on (Day, Month, Year) as affirmed by the signatures below and the Director of the Ph.D. Program.

---

(name, title, institution)

Chair, Dissertation Committee

---

(name, title, institution)

Dissertation Committee Member

---

(name, title, institution)

Dissertation Committee Member

---

(name, title)

Director of the SSW Ph.D. Program

## Appendix N: Dissertation Submission & Graduation Procedures

After the dissertation is defended, all students must submit their dissertation as follows:

- A) To the Ph.D. program by emailing a digital PDF copy of the full dissertation to the Director of the Ph.D. program.
- B) To the Simmons University Archives as a condition of graduation. You can find the requirements here: <https://www.simmons.edu/library/archives/donating/theses-dissertations>

The University Archives does not require a physical copy of theses and dissertations be submitted. Instead, it requires that students submit:

- 1 digital copy of the work in PDF format
- an abstract
- a signed submission form

In addition, students are requested to do the following:

- C) Submit the dissertation to NASW Press's Dissertation Abstracts so that it can be indexed in the social work knowledge base. For more information on how to do this, go to: <https://www.naswpress.org/students/dissertation.html>.
- D) Submit the dissertation to ProQuest, which is the dissertation repository for the Library of Congress. For more information on how to do this, go to the Simmons University Archives page.

Graduation procedures:

Students may file to graduate in January, May or August. Students filing in January and May will be included in that academic year's commencement activities in May. Students filing in August will be included in the following academic year's commencement activities in May. Submission of all dissertation materials must be submitted 4 weeks prior to the commencement date of the academic year. Commencement dates can be found on the Simmons University academic calendar: <https://www.simmons.edu/academics/academic-calendar>

Students intending to graduate must notify the Director of the Ph.D. program at least 2 months prior to the graduation date – earlier if possible – and submit a completed electronic copy of the Ph.D. program requirement checklist at that time. The Director will conduct an audit of the checklist against University records to ensure they have met all of the graduation requirements. The Director will notify the student as soon as possible (usually within 2 weeks) after the audit is completed to confirm the student is verified to graduate.

Students must file a Petition to Graduate form through the Registrar's Office well in advance of the graduation date. See: <https://www.simmons.edu/academics/registrar/forms>

Students who have been approved for graduation will receive information on graduation ceremonies from the University. There are two graduation ceremonies for Ph.D. students – a Ph.D. hooding ceremony and the degree confirmation ceremony (traditional graduation ceremony).

**Appendix O: Simmons University Social Work Ph.D. Program Progress Checklist Entering Fall 2022**

<b>Program Requirements</b>	<b>Course #</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Sem/Year completed</b>
<b>Year 1</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Quantitative Scientific Methods	SW-OL 650	3	F 2022
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Analysis in Political, Social and Economic Contexts	SW-OL 634	3	F 2022
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL685A	1	F 2022
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrating Public Policy Issues/Outcomes into Social Work Research	SW-OL 670	3	SP 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Qualitative Scientific Methods	SW-OL 654	3	SP 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685A	1	SP 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Qualitative Research Analysis	SW-OL 635	3	SU 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Statistics and Data Analysis	SW-OL 651	3	SU 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685A	1	SP 2023
<b>First year total credits</b>		<b>21</b>	
<b>Year 2</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Multiple Variable Statistics	SW-OL 652	3	F 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy of Science	SW-OL 631	3	F 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685A	1	F 2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Social and Behavioral Theory	SW-OL 610	3	SP 2024
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey Research Methods	SW-OL 633	3	SP 2024
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685A	1	SP 2024
<input type="checkbox"/> Intervention Research	SW-OL 624	3	SU 2024
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685A	1	SU 2024
<b>Second year total credits</b>		<b>18</b>	
<b>Year 3</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive exam		0	F 2024
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685B	1	F 2024
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685B	1	SP 2025
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685B	1	SU 2025
<b>Year 4 and beyond (until graduation)</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685C*	0	Fall 2025
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrative Research & Professional Development Seminar	SW-OL 685C*	0	Spring 2026
<b>Other requirements</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching methodologies, course design & assessment	HPED 531 or equivalent	3	Taken any semester
<input type="checkbox"/> Publishable paper submitted (prior to proposal defense)		0	
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching practicum (prior to dissertation defense)	SW-OL 691	0	
<input type="checkbox"/> Research Practicum (prior to proposal defense)	SW-OL 690	0	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dissertation proposal defended			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dissertation defended			
<b>Total Required Credits:</b>		<b>45</b>	

\*SW685C credit cost is a matriculation continuance fee. Credits do not count towards graduation. Enrollment in SWO 685B and SWO 685C are recorded as full time enrollment while students complete dissertation work.

### **Appendix P: Student Business Card Request Form**

#### Simmons University Ph.D. Student Business Card Request

**Instructions:**

Please fill out this form and submit it by email to the Ph.D. Program Director for approval. Once approved, the form will be forwarded to the SW Operations Manager who will place the order. The cost of one box of cards purchased directly through Simmons is approximately \$30.

Contact information for how to reach you regarding this request and/or when the order arrives:

Date:

Name:

Email address:

Contact information to be printed on the cards:

Your Name as you wish it to appear:

Please indicate one of these:

\_\_\_\_\_ Ph.D. student (if have not yet passed the qualifying exam)

Or

\_\_\_\_\_ Ph.D. candidate (if you have passed the qualifying exam)

Simmons email address:

Telephone number if you wish to list one:

Note: Simmons University's address will be listed as the mailing address on all card orders.