

PhD Program Handbook



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**Message from the Dean
David A. Jenkins, PhD**

On behalf of the faculty, staff, students, and alumni, I want to welcome you to the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville. I am thrilled you have chosen our program to begin this new chapter in your life. Pursuing a doctoral degree is a big decision and we have developed a top-notch PhD Program to help prepare you for an exciting and rewarding future.

There is a great need for doctoral graduates in the Social Work profession. Highly educated social workers are the next generation of leaders in academics, research, and practice. A Kent School PhD will give you the tools necessary to take advantage of these and other career opportunities.

The Kent School faculty pursue strong national research agendas and maintain deep community connections. You will have opportunities to learn from them in the classroom and work with local agencies on projects that shape the Commonwealth of Kentucky and other communities.

We are proud of our program's reputation and we pledge to support and encourage you through your course of study. We are confident you will be well positioned to enter the competitive marketplace upon graduation. Have a great experience.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Go Cards!

Message from the Director
Andy Frey, PhD, LCSW

Welcome to the PhD Program at the Kent School of Social Work! Congratulations, you have chosen to join a community of scholars committed to addressing complex social problems through education, research and service to create a just and better world. Our PhD program is designed to develop scholars prepared to create knowledge through research that informs interventions and policies and educate future social workers to address critical social problems and pursue social justice. Upon graduation, you will be prepared for positions in academic and related research settings.

Throughout your time here, you will collaborate with a diverse group of nationally recognized faculty within the school and university with expertise in the areas of social and child welfare, child and family wellbeing, gerontology, health and mental health, justice and criminality, school social work, substance abuse, and international social work. You will be guided in developing expertise in an area of social sciences research. Finally, you will be mentored and supported on becoming a faculty member and balancing research, teaching, and service as you prepare for your future career.

We are honored to have you here at the University of Louisville for your training. Please take some time to get involved with our faculty and be sure to let me know how I can make your educational experience an outstanding one.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook has been designed to be a resource for students, candidates, and faculty, particularly with regard to understanding the components of the PhD program, as well as the expectations, policies, and procedures the guide our collaborative efforts to help students matriculate through the program successfully. The faculty and staff of the Kent School of Social Work provide education, leadership, mentoring, and guidance to assist students in obtaining the maximum possible benefit from graduate education. For additional advice and/or clarification of expectations, policies, and procedures; students should consult with their mentor, comprehensive exam/dissertation chair, the PhD program director, or program coordinator.

Tips and Resources for Efficient and Effective Navigation to Graduation

Know Your Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the students and candidates to become familiar with and observe all policies and requirements of the program. It is imperative that students and candidates respond to official notices issued by administrative offices and instructors, whether these notices are posted on official sites or sent through email.

Stay in Contact

When questions or concerns arise, check with the doctoral program office first. We like to know what is going on, and if we cannot assist you directly, we will help you find the answers you seek. There are a couple of exceptions. If you were awarded an assistantship and have questions about payroll, you should email the Kent School Business Service Center at kentserv@louisville.edu. If you were awarded a fellowship, minority assistantship or another type of award, you need to contact the Graduate School at 502-852-5882. If you have questions or problems with your student insurance, please contact Camille Smith at 502-852-6519 or stuins@louisville.edu.

Use your UofL Email for all University-related Correspondence

Kent School administration, faculty, and staff as well as the University Bursar's Office, Registrar's Office, and Financial Aid Office ONLY communicate with students via their university email accounts. It is imperative that students use their university accounts and check email on a regular basis as it is the best way to stay connected with the school and informed of any important issues.

Become Familiar with ULINK

Ulink is the website portal for all information access. This [page](#) will answer almost any question regarding classes and academic progress along with payments and financial aid.

Change of Contact Information

If your contact information changes, change this information online through Ulink and email the program coordinator to update your information.

Become Familiar with your BLACKBOARD Page

Your BLACKBOARD link has information regarding doctoral courses and registration procedures.

Become Familiar with the Graduate School Website

UofL's [Graduate School web pages](#) contain helpful information for students.

Become Familiar with the Resources at the Back of this Handbook

Please see the tables on pages 12-16, which provide an overview of the University and Graduate School Policies and Resources and forms that are most commonly utilized by students and candidates.

Organizational Overview

University of Louisville

The University of Louisville is a state-supported research university located in Kentucky's largest metropolitan area. It was a municipally supported public institution for many decades prior to joining the university system in 1970. The University has three campuses. The 287-acre Belknap Campus is three miles from downtown Louisville and houses eight of the university's 12 colleges and schools. The Health Sciences Center is situated in downtown Louisville's medical complex and houses the university's health-related programs and the University of Louisville Hospital. The 243-acre Shelby Campus is located in eastern Jefferson County. The University of Louisville will be ubiquitously recognized as a great place to learn, a great place to work, and a great place in which to invest because we will celebrate diversity, foster equity, and strive for inclusion. The University of Louisville is committed to achieving preeminence as a nationally recognized metropolitan research university. For additional information, click [here](#).

Mission statement. The University of Louisville pursues excellence and inclusiveness in its work to educate and serve its community through:

1. teaching diverse undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in order to develop engaged citizens, leaders, and scholars
2. practicing and applying research, scholarship and creative activity
3. providing engaged service and outreach that improve the quality of life for local and global communities

The Kent School of Social Work

The Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work has its roots in Louisville, Kentucky, beginning with social welfare activity in the early 1900s. For almost 80 years, the Kent School of Social Work has undergone many transformations, but during that time it has always maintained a close working relationship with the practice community and the region's human service needs.

Mission statement. The Kent School of Social Work addresses complex social problems through education, research and service to create a just and better world.

For additional information about the Kent School, click [here](#).

PhD Program

The PhD program's origins date back to 1996 and 1997, when a team of faculty members from the University of Louisville and University of Kentucky worked together to plan the curriculum for a joint program that consisted of core courses including research competence and theoretical aspects of social work along with individualized study (e.g., child welfare, substance abuse, gerontology, urban issues). The program was approved at each institution, and the first class matriculated in the fall of 1997. In 2020, the formal relationship between the two institutions was terminated. Kent School graduates have gone on to work as faculty members in schools of social work nationally and internationally as well as in a variety of other research, administrative and policy positions.

Mission statement. The program develops scholars prepared to create knowledge through research that informs interventions and policies and educate future social workers to address critical social problems and pursue social justice. The program also prepares its graduates for positions in academic and related research settings.

Goals:

1. Graduates will demonstrate advanced critical thinking skills and knowledge necessary to be leaders in the social work profession as researchers, academicians and advocates for social justice.
2. Graduates will demonstrate mastery of an area of theoretical and methodological expertise to address specific social problems.
3. Graduates will demonstrate mastery of research methodology and advanced statistics, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.
4. Graduates will demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare future social workers to address complex social problems.

For additional information about the Kent School, click [here](#).

Program Faculty and Staff

Andy Frey, PhD, LCSW

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All Kent School faculty support doctoral education through teaching core courses, independent studies, and research practica, and also serving as advisors/mentors to students. The [research directory](#) profiles the scholarship of each faculty member and summarizes their activities.

Program Address

110 Patterson Hall
 Kent School of Social Work
 2313 S. 3rd Street
 University of Louisville
 Louisville, KY 40208

Program Components

The components of the program include: (a) coursework, (b) comprehensive examination, (c) dissertation, and (d) mentoring and professional development. The program requires a total of 50 credit hours. A revised curriculum is nearing final stages; minor adjustments are possible.

Coursework

The coursework consists of 50 credit hours including 35 credit hours of core curriculum and 15 hours of individualized curriculum (independent studies and electives). Six of the 15 individualized credits must be in research methods or statistics. Individualized coursework is tailored to each student's educational goals. Nine credit hours are electives and six are focused individualized studies. The electives may include PhD-level courses inside or outside the Kent School; in general 700-level courses from any unit are acceptable provided they are consistent with student's professional development plan. 600-level courses require a more detailed vetting of the syllabus.

Individualized study projects are identified in consultation with a student's mentor. These studies must be approved by the faculty member serving as the instructor of record and the student's mentor. Once projects are confirmed and syllabi designed, the student submits the Independent Study form with required signatures (see forms section) to the PhD Program Office. The coordinator will facilitate automatic registration through the Registrar.

1st Year: Fall

- Pro Seminar I: Foundations of Scholarly Writing (1)
- Theory I: Philosophy of Science and the Development and Application of Theory in Social Work Research and Interventions (3)
- Foundation Research Methods (3)
- Introduction to Social Statistics and Data Analysis (3)

1st Year: Spring

- Systematic Change: Identifying and Intervening in Issues of Social Justice (3)
- Theory II: Theory-Driven Analysis of Social Problems to Inform Practice & Social Welfare Policy (3)
- Advanced Research Methods (3)
- Applied Regression Analysis (3)

1st Year: Summer

- Individualized Study: [Examination of Scholarly Literature] (3)
- Individualized Study: [Mentored Research Experience] (3)

2nd Year: Fall

- Advanced Scholarly Writing to Fund and Disseminate Research to Diverse Audiences (3)
- Advanced Qualitative Methods: Design, Data Collection, and Analysis (3)
- Elective (3)
- Elective (3)

2nd Year: Spring

- Pro Seminar II: Comprehensive Examination Preparation (1)
- Teaching in Social Work (3)
- Teaching Practicum (3)
- Elective (3)

Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination evaluates knowledge and skill deemed critical prior to beginning the dissertation. Students are eligible to write their examination upon successful completion of required coursework. A thorough [description of the comprehensive examination](#) details the following requirements: (a) eligibility, (b) committee, (c) committee roles and responsibilities, (d) expected content, (e) length of exam with time allotments, and (f) evaluation of student performance. Following successful completion of the comprehensive examination, students are admitted to *Candidacy* status and proceed with their dissertation.

2nd Year: Summer

- Dissertation Preparation (6)

Dissertation

The primary requirement of a dissertation is that it contributes to the knowledge base of the social work profession. It must represent independent work and be based on original research. Dissertation committees have at least four members and must include one member outside of the Kent School. If the outside member does not have a primary appointment as UofL faculty but is otherwise qualified, they may be granted ad hoc approval to participate. Dissertation information such as deadlines and preparation guidelines dictated by the University are at the [Graduate School website](#). Please note semester deadlines and that the Request to Schedule Final Oral Defense form must be completed by the student. The required steps to complete the dissertation can be found at [Steps to Complete Dissertation](#).

Mentoring and Professional Development System

The mentoring and professional development system supplements the coursework, comprehensive examination, and dissertation. A large component of this system is to prepare and support candidates or recent graduates to obtain employment. Because many of the activities associated with this system are optional, the responsibility is largely on the student to take advantage of them. If they do not participate, they will likely enter the job market at a disadvantage. A typical workshop series can be found at [Doctoral Program Workshop Series](#)

Annual academic and professional development review. Students that have not identified a mentor prior to starting the program are required to identify one during their first semester¹. The student and mentor should have similar areas of substantive or methodological interest. Agreeing to be a mentor involves a commitment to guide the student through the first two years, including the annual academic and professional development review process. The transition to candidacy involves renegotiating whether the mentor will continue to be the candidate's primary faculty support, which typically involves chairing the comprehensive exam and the dissertation. A critical role of the mentor in the first two years is to facilitate the academic and professional development review procedures ([Annual Review Summary](#)).

¹ Student mentorship is ideally considered during the admissions process and established the summer before the students begins coursework.

Peer mentoring program. The purpose of the peer mentoring program is to provide support through peer advising, encourage positive academic and social interactions, and promote a unified community among students and candidates. The program focuses on impacting student retention as well as promoting high academic standards and leadership development. As part of the peer mentoring program, the program coordinator will assign three or four students to a peer system that includes: (a) a student in their 1st year, (b) a student in their 2nd year, and (c) a candidate. It is recommended that students meet at least every other month. Gathering in the doctoral student lounge (Patterson 108) is encouraged. The candidate is expected to coordinate the group unless other arrangements are made. If a team is inactive, students/candidates should notify the doctoral program coordinator to reconfigure the group. Examples of activities for peer mentoring groups include: (a) sharing completed papers with feedback so recently admitted students know what type of work is expected, (b) co-authoring manuscripts, and (c) providing an audience for class or conference presentations.

PLAN seminars. [PLAN workshops](#), offered through the graduate school, address retirement, teaching, Endnote, dissertation writing, research presentations, mentoring, and publishing.

Professional service experiences. Candidates are encouraged to participate in professional service activities. Optional experiences include but are not limited to committee involvement at the school or university, leadership or volunteer roles in professional associations, and service as an editor for a journal. At the Kent School and University, committee involvement is guided by the [Kent School bylaws](#). Students should notify the program coordinator about their interest in committee work upon completion of their comprehensive examinations. The doctoral program office will coordinate their involvement for the following year. For professional service and editorial options, students should notify their mentors/chairs as they are best suited to facilitate these experiences.

Brown bag lunches. Brown bag lunch sessions are scheduled periodically during the semester. They provide an opportunity for faculty and students to assemble to share and discuss current and future research with one another.

Procedures for Review and Dismissal from the Program

The director will appoint an ad hoc Academic and Professional Standards Review Committee consisting of three faculty members, one of which is the student's faculty mentor/chair, to make a recommendation regarding dismissal of the student/candidate from the program when he/she receives an unsatisfactory annual review, has exceeded the time allowed for completion of the doctoral degree², has engaged in academic misconduct and/or dishonesty (i.e. cheating, plagiarism), or is in poor academic standing³ and/or on academic probation⁴. The committee will make its recommendation to the director within a month of being appointed based on a review of the student's academic and professional development record. A majority of the faculty present at the review must vote to accept the committee's recommendation for the student to be dismissed from the program. The committee's recommendation will be reviewed by the director and a recommendation will be made to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Dean for final action. If a student/candidate would like to appeal a dismissal, they should submit a letter to the Dean within 14 days of being recommended for dismissal.

² Doctoral students have four (4) years after passing the qualifying exams to finish all other degree requirements.

³ A graduate student is in poor standing when his/her graduate grade point average is below 3.0 on a 4-point scale or higher.

⁴ Any student with a semester GPA below 3.0 will receive an academic warning from the Graduate School. A notification will be sent to the student as well the student's graduate program. Should a student's cumulative GPA fall below 3.0, the student will be placed on probation until the student regains a 3.0 average (which is required to graduate). Ordinarily students are not permitted to continue on academic probation for more than one semester.

University and Graduate School Policies and Resources

Several general academic policies and procedures drawn from the University Graduate Catalog are applicable to graduate students and candidates. Table 1 highlights those most applicable.

Policy	Summary
Graduate Catalog	The Graduate Catalog is the official listing of the policies governing graduate education at the University of Louisville.
The Redbook	<i>The Redbook</i> is the official statement of the organizational structure, the rules of governance and procedures, and university-wide policies of the University of Louisville. If there is any conflict between the policies, procedures or other statements contained within this catalog, <i>The Redbook</i> shall govern.
Student Handbook	The University of Louisville student handbook includes additional policies and information covering students.
Academic Dishonesty	In addition to University student conduct policies, PhD students are governed by Kent School Academic Performance Policies including academic dishonesty. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious violations of academic conduct and may result in permanent dismissal. A plea of ignorance is not a defense against academic dishonesty charges.
Student Code of Conduct	The Code of Student Conduct ("The Code") is the University's policy regarding non-academic misconduct of students and student organizations. Academic dishonesty is not covered by this Code, but rather falls within the authority of the individual academic units of the University. Students have the responsibility to follow all regulations outlined in this policy.
Leave of Absence	A student who has been accepted into a graduate program is expected to remain in continuous enrollment throughout matriculation. However, if circumstances arise that may cause an interruption in graduate study a student may apply for a leave of absence by requesting such a leave from the unit dean.
Leave Recommendation for Graduate Students on Assistantships	Graduate students do not accumulate vacation, personal, or sick leave, and the provisions of FMLA do not apply to them.
Parental, Family, and Medical Leave for Graduate Students	The process for these policies is outlined at this link.
Full-Time Study	Full-time study for graduate students is defined as enrollment in Nine (9) credit hours during the Fall semester, OR Nine (9) credit hours during the Spring semester, OR Six (6) credit hours during the Summer semester, OR In degree candidacy status.

Full-Time Study for University Fellows and Graduate Assistants	All University Fellows and Graduate Assistants receiving financial support must be enrolled as full-time students during the period for which they are receiving support.
Continuous Enrollment	Continuous enrollment is defined as being registered in both Fall and Spring if registering for course work. If a student has been admitted to doctoral degree candidacy, continuous enrollment in candidacy status is required for the Fall, Spring and Summer terms (only one term of registration is required in summer terms). Students must be enrolled during the semester in which they wish to graduate.
Course Loads	Normally, the maximum number of credit hours that may be taken in a regular semester is twelve (12). The maximum number of credit hours that may be taken in the Summer session (both terms) is twelve (12), including research hours. The Graduate School must approve a Variance if a student wants to exceed these maximums.
Graduate Student Academic Grievance Procedure	This procedure is designed to provide fair means of dealing with student complaints regarding a specific action or decision made by the faculty or a faculty member. For additional information on student rights click here .
Severe Weather	When weather conditions warrant a decision to remain on regular opening schedules or to deviate, UofL administration, when possible, will announce schedule changes for morning classes by 6 a.m. and for evening classes by 3 p.m. For the purpose of severe weather announcements, evening classes are those that begin at or after 4:15 p.m.
Grades and Grading Policies	The GPA appearing on the University transcript at the end of each semester of enrollment will be the official GPA for determining academic standing. The program director may approve up to six credit hours in which a grade of C+, C, or C- is received to count towards completion of degree requirements. An additional three credit hours in which a grade of C+, C, or C- is received may count towards completion of degree requirements pending approval from the director and Vice Provost of Graduate Academic Affairs.

Table 1. University Policies and Procedures (partial list)

Table 2 highlights University resources for students and candidates.

Resource	Summary
Academic resources	A variety of resources are available for students including information related to academic calendars, the Career Center, libraries, the Registrar's Office, and the Writing Center.
Schedule of Classes	Students may register during priority early registration before the beginning of the semester. A student's first opportunity is based on classification and alphabetic rotation. Initial registration must be completed by the date announced by the Registrar.
Disability Resource Center	The Disability Resource Center fosters an inclusive campus climate through education, service, collaboration, and outreach to the University community, providing support for students with documented disabilities by promoting equal access.
Office of the Bursar	For tuition and fee information.
Financial Aid	Individual advisors are assigned alphabetically by the first letter of a student's last name.
Counseling Center	For information about UofL resources as well as those available in the community.
Student Health Services	For campus health service information.
Career Development Center	For Career Center services, please see designated Kent School staff for assistance.
Information Technology Help Desk	The IT help desk is dedicated to supporting technology experience at UofL whether working online, remotely, or with applications and core systems.
International Center	The International Center is comprised of two offices, the Office of Study Abroad and International Travel, and the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office.
Parking	Please note that there are different parking rules and regulations associated with the Belknap and Health Sciences campuses.
Human Subjects Protection Program	The Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) helps to ensure that all University of Louisville research involving human participants is conducted in accordance with Federal and State regulations and University and sponsoring agency policies and procedures instituted to protect their rights and welfare. HSPPO upholds this commitment to the protection of human participants involved in research regardless of the funding source and regardless of the location of the research. HSPPO supports two duly established and independent Institutional Review Boards (hereby referred to as IRBs) that review and approve protocols for all research involving human participants. The IRBs also serve as the University's institutional Privacy Board.

Table 2. Commonly utilized or recommended resources to students and candidates

Forms

Table 3 highlights the forms that are most commonly utilized by students and candidates, including required signatures and purpose of the form.

Form Name	Who Completes Form	Purpose of Form
Drop/Add Form	Student	Dropping/Adding a course after registration. This form is in ULink.
Variance Request Form	Student	This form is used for multiple purposes i.e. taking more courses than permitted in the semester, requesting medical leave, etc. After download and completed, it must be submitted at the Graduate School portal.
Graduate Assistant Workload Waiver Request Form	Director	Graduate students on an assistantship are limited to 20 hours of work. If eligible to work an additional 9 hours per week, the director must submit this form (login required).
Request for Travel	Student	This form must be completed when students travel under University auspices.
Individualized Study Form	Student and Faculty	Students must complete this form and have it signed by their mentor, supervising faculty, and Dean prior to enrolling in an Independent Study. Forms are sent to Susan Pierce in the Registrar's Office who will register the student. Faculty upload syllabi to Blackboard after registration process.
Completed Coursework Form	Student, Professor and Director	This form must be completed before students take comprehensive exams to affirm coursework has been completed and final grades are reflected on the transcript.
Dissertation Committee Appointment	Dissertation Committee	A form indicating the appointment of the five-member dissertation committee that the student must verify.
Approval of Dissertation Proposal	Dissertation Committee	This form is completed by the dissertation committee when it approves the student's dissertation proposal.
Schedule Final Oral Defense	Student	This form is completed notifying the Graduate School that the date and time for the oral defense of the dissertation is scheduled (student login required.)
Warrant of Dissertation	Doctoral Office	This form is submitted to the Graduate School once the student passes the dissertation defense.
Title Page Dissertation	Student	Students submit this form to the Graduate School and copy to doctoral office.
Progress to Degree	Student and Mentor	Mentors and students submit this form to the PhD Program Office as part of the annual review process.

Curriculum Monitoring	Student and Mentor	Mentors and Students submit this form to the PhD Program Office as part of the annual review process.
Assessment Tool	Faculty	Description of 16-item Qualtrics survey that assesses student proficiency.
Request to Withdraw	Student	This form is submitted to the Graduate School by the student requesting withdrawal from the doctoral program and University (student login required).
Qualifying Exam Results	Director	This form is submitted to the Graduate School by the program director regarding qualifying exams results (log in required). Submission required to confirm candidacy status before Graduate School enrolls them in DOCT 600. Enrollment is then automatic until dissertation defense.
Doctoral Exam Prep	Director	This form is submitted to the Graduate School by the program director when exams aren't completed successfully (log in required). Students must receive approval from the Graduate School to extend dissertation preparation course.

Table 3. Forms that are most commonly utilized by students and candidates

Scholarships

Graduate Research Assistantships, Teaching Assistantships, and Fellowships are available to support fulltime students. Stipend amounts are the same for both assistantships and fellowships. Assistantships are awarded by the program for four years and cover a monthly stipend, full tuition, and health insurance. Assistantships require recipients to work up to 20 hours a week with a faculty member for the duration of the funding period.

University Fellowships, Diversity Fellowships and Scholarships are awarded by the Graduate School to PhD students nominated by the program director and selected by the Graduate School. Fellowships do not require recipients to work during the two years of funding. Fellowship recipients receive an additional two years of assistantship from the Program where they are required to work while funded with the assistantships.

The Graduate School also offers dissertation completion awards and other support to students to complete their PhD degree in a timely manner. For more information on university fellowships please see their [website](#).

Information about available funding including the Kueber Family Foundation Assistantship application can be found [here](#). This assistantship covers three years of tuition and fees. It is a 10-month award with a preference for students pursuing research in child welfare (residential care, foster care, adoption, etc.) This award may include collaboration with residential services at Seven Counties/Bellewood and Brooklawn. Applicants for the Kueber Assistantship must hold a master's degree in social work and remain in good standing.