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Policies, regulations, and information for all BSW, MSW, and PhD students

University information and policies

The VCU Insider Student Handbook and Resource Guide is published by the university and provides important information and policies that all students at VCU need to know. Students in the School of Social Work must be familiar with and abide by all policies published in his handbook, which is available online at:

https://docs.google.com/a/vcu.edu/file/d/0B7z3ZniSHWXVeGRCQjhuSHMtMTA/edit

University Academic regulations, policies, and degree requirements

Specific university and degree program academic regulations and policies, as well as all degree requirements are listed in the undergraduate and graduate bulletins, available at: http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/ Students in the School of Social Work must be familiar with the academic policies of the university for students in undergraduate and graduate programs and the specific degree requirements of their respective program.

Exception to policies

Exceptions to school or university policies may be granted for extenuating circumstances after appropriate review and consideration by the proper officials. The program director of the respective program can provide information regarding requests for exceptions. Due process policies and procedures

Grade reviews

Detailed information about initiating a grade review (appeal), the mediation procedure, and the grade review committee and hearings, can be found in the university bulletins: http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/Bulletins/undergraduate/?uid=10096&iid=30785

If, after reviewing the VCU Grade Review Procedure and consulting with the instructor about the assigned grade, the student continues to believe that the course grade was not correctly assigned, the student can initiate a formal grade review (appeal). Students should consult with their faculty or student success adviser for guidance in preparing the written Grade Review Request Form

Within the time frame specified in the Grade Review Procedure as stated in the university bulletin, students requesting a grade review must submit the written Grade Review Request Form and supplementary materials to the Program Director of the program in which the course was taught.
The outcome of failed comprehensive examinations, on first or second attempt, or both, can be appealed through the process indicated in the comprehensive examinations section of this policy handbook.

**Readmission of students terminated from the B.S.W., M.S.W. or the Ph.D. program**

Readmission of students is subject to university regulations and is guided by the following policies.

Students who are terminated from the B.S.W., M.S.W. or Ph.D. program may petition the dean of the School of Social Work by completing the form for readmission to the program. Students cannot return to the program until they have been out of the program a minimum of two semesters, counting the summer. Readmission is not guaranteed.

A student may be readmitted only once.

A former Ph.D. student who was dismissed from the program after failing any or all parts of the comprehensive examination upon a second attempt is not eligible for readmission.

Students must submit the [Request for Readmission Form](#) and supplementary materials to the dean no later than February 1 for summer and fall readmission, and September 1 for spring readmission. Students should consult with the Director of Student Success for guidance in preparing the request.

The written request for readmission must include documentation (e.g., supplementary materials) of how deficiencies and/or problems which resulted in termination have been remedied and a plan for continued remediation. The student’s statement must explicitly discuss the circumstances which led to the termination from the program.

Applications for readmission from formerly disqualified students are reviewed by a faculty panel of the Programs Committee.

Prior to its review and recommendation, the panel will request feedback from instructors in whose course the petitioner earned grades of C, D, or F or had a mark of W or I or about the petitioner’s academic performance and may request additional information from other relevant parties, such as advisers, field liaisons, and field instructors regarding the issues and problems which resulted in the student’s termination.

A student may request to meet with the panel for the purpose of clarifying information submitted and answering questions in support of their application for readmission.

A student who is readmitted to his/her previous program after being dropped for academic reasons will be bound by the terms of readmission determined by the review panel in consultation with the program director and additionally by the following stipulations:
Undergraduate students - Once readmitted, if a student earns a D or below in the same course that led to termination, he/she will be dropped from the program and will not be considered for readmission.

Graduate students - A Ph.D. student who has earned a C or lower in two or more courses must, upon readmission, repeat one or more of the courses in which the C or lower grade was earned, based upon the committee’s recommendation, and with input from the Ph.D. program director. Once readmitted, if an M.S.W. or Ph.D. student earns an additional C or below, he/she will be dropped from the program and will not be considered for readmission.

The faculty review panel submits their recommendation for readmission and readmission requirements to the dean no later than May 10 for summer and fall readmission and no later than December 10 for spring readmission. The dean makes a final decision and, within 10 calendar days of receiving the panel’s recommendation, communicates the decision in writing to the student and the appropriate university office, with copies to the associate dean, the appropriate program director, the director of field instruction (if appropriate) and the chair of the panel. A copy of the decision and all documentation will be placed in the student’s file. The decision of the dean is final.

Termination appeal

The Program Termination Appeals process is subject to university regulations found in the VCU Insider/Resource Guide and official university bulletins and is guided by the following additional policies:

Students who are terminated from the B.S.W., M.S.W. or Ph.D. program may appeal the termination. Students initiate the appeal by submitting a written notification of appeal and reasons to the dean of the School of Social Work. Students should consult with the Director of Student Success for guidance in preparing appeal.

Terminated students appealing program termination assume the burden of proof.

The terminated student must submit the Termination Appeal Form and any relevant supplementary materials to the dean within 10 business days of receiving written official notification of termination. Students terminated from the M.S.W. or Ph.D. programs receive official notification of the termination by the Dean of the Graduate School. Students terminated from the B.S.W. program receive official notification by the Dean of the School of Social Work.

Grounds for appealing a termination include one or both of the following grounds — the appellant must address in a written statement which of the following apply:

The termination was effected without regard for the academic policies and requirements of the B.S.W., M.S.W. or Ph.D. program of the School of Social Work.
The termination was effected without regard for the academic policies and requirements of the university for undergraduate, graduate or doctoral students

Termination appeals are reviewed by a faculty review panel of the Programs Committee of the School of Social Work. Prior to its review and recommendation, the panel may request additional information from school administrators regarding how the student’s termination was effected. An appellant may also request to meet with the panel one time for the purpose of clarifying information submitted and answering questions in support of their appeal.

The panel submits a recommendation to uphold or reverse the termination to the dean no later than October 15 for spring and summer termination appeals and March 15 for fall termination appeals. The dean makes a final decision and, within 10 days of receiving the panel's recommendation, communicates the decision in writing to the student and the appropriate university office, with copies to the associate dean, the appropriate program director, the director of field instruction (if appropriate) and the chair of the panel. A copy of the decision and all documentation will be put in the student’s file.

M.S.W. and Ph.D. students may appeal an unfavorable school decision to the Dean of the Graduate School and should refer to the VCU Graduate School policies for program termination appeal. In cases involving B.S.W. appellants, the School of Social Work Dean’s decision is final.

The appellant may be allowed to register for courses during the pendency of the appeal, understanding that he/she will be retroactively dropped if the termination is upheld.

**Graduation and commencement policies**

The university confers degrees in December, May and August and holds commencement exercises in May and December of each year. The School of Social Work holds commencement exercises in May only.

B.S.W. and M.S.W. students must have applied for May graduation, or must be within six credit hours of meeting degree requirements in the summer semester, to be eligible to participate in university and school commencement exercises in May. December graduates participate in the May commencement exercises of the following year. In these cases, the faculty or student success adviser must be notified.

Doctoral candidates must have applied for graduation and successfully completed the dissertation project prior to the end of the spring semester to participate in the May ceremony.

Doctoral candidates who complete the dissertation project and apply for an August or December graduation, may participate in the following year’s May ceremony.
To graduate, the student must submit an application for graduation to his or her faculty or student success adviser or dissertation chair no later than the date specified by the university in the academic calendar for each respective semester. Applications are available online at: www.enrollment.vcu.edu/rar/graduation_instructions.html

**Student folders**

A folder for each student admitted to a program in the School of Social Work is maintained in the respective B.S.W., M.S.W., or Ph.D. program office. The folder contains admission materials, academic histories, copies of correspondence addressed to the student, other documents related to the student’s education, and other materials pertinent to educational planning. Information is maintained for use by the student’s faculty or student success adviser and others on a need to know basis.

The student folder is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act found in the university bulletins. Students wishing to review material contained in the folder may do so by contacting the associate dean for academic and student affairs.

**Notification of instructors when students become ill**

If a student is unable to attend classes or field instruction for a length of time due to illness, his or her faculty or student success adviser should be notified. A note will be sent by the faculty or student success adviser to each of the student’s instructors.

If the student will be out of class for a long period of time, which may jeopardize his or her academic standing, the faculty or student success adviser will discuss the appropriate withdrawal alternatives with the student and relatives when applicable. If the student who is ill lives in a residence hall, he or she may notify the Office of Residential Life and Housing. The office will then notify the associate dean of the school and instructors.

**Change of address and other personal information**

Changes to address and other personal information must be communicated to the university and can be made using eServices, in-person at Harris Hall, 1015 Floyd Ave., 1st Floor, or by writing to Records and Registration. This information cannot be taken over the telephone or by e-mail.

**Official Communication and Announcements**

The official method of communication for the university is through the student’s VCU email address. For this reason, students are responsible for checking their VCU email regularly. Announcements and information are also available through the school’s website and through social media.
Class attendance

Students pursuing professional education and advanced degrees are expected to attend all classes. The classroom instructor should be notified when a student expects to miss a class. Students are responsible for knowing the attendance policy of individual instructors and are encouraged to also communicate with their faculty or student success adviser about attendance issues.

Registration

Students are responsible for timely registration and knowing the sequence of courses needed to complete accurate registration each semester of enrollment. Failure to enroll in a timely basis may result in a graduation delay of up to one year. Courses may not be added or dropped after the end of the add/drop period at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters as established by the university.

Courses may not be added or dropped after the second day of class during the summer term. After the drop/add period and prior to the end of the withdraw period established by the university, students may withdraw from a course or courses. Students should consult their faculty or student success adviser before dropping or withdrawing from a course. This is to ensure that students are not dropping or withdrawing from a course which is a co-requisite to current courses or a prerequisite to courses for which they plan to register during subsequent semesters. Students must contact Financial Aid if they are receiving any form of financial aid when they withdraw from any courses or drop from full-time to part-time status.

Statement of Philosophy on teaching, learning and grading

The statement is offered as one way to clarify and make explicit our expectations for students and faculty as well as our philosophy around teaching, learning, grading and evaluation. Review the statement.

Disability Support Services

The VCU Disability Support Services (DSS) Office assists Virginia Commonwealth University in creating a learning environment where all students have equal access to every aspect of the University's programs, services and activities. DSS determines appropriate academic adjustments such as program and examination modifications, classroom accommodations and auxiliary aids.

Students with disabilities are responsible for self-identification prior to requesting services and may do so at any time by presenting documentation to their campus coordinator. For more information, please contact DSS campus coordinator at:
Disability Support Services - Monroe Park Campus
907 Floyd Avenue, Room 102 (Student Commons)
Voice/TTY: (804) 828-2253
Fax: (804) 828-1944

Accreditation of B.S.W. and M.S.W. programs

The B.S.W. and M.S.W programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Visit the Council on Social Work Education to view the curriculum policy statement and accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master’s social work education.

Withdrawal from classes for medical reasons after the end of the withdrawal period

After the last day to withdraw and before the end of the semester, students may request a medical withdrawal. A request for medical withdrawal should be initiated with the faculty or student success adviser using the Request for Medical Withdrawal Form, who will submit request and all supporting medical documentation to the dean's office for approval. If approved, the dean’s office will forward the documentation to the proper university department for processing. Please refer to the graduate or undergraduate bulletin for more information.

Student representation on school and faculty governance committees

Selected student representatives of the B.S.W., M.S.W., and Ph.D. programs serve on program and school committees to represent student voices relating to policies affecting academic and student affairs.

In addition to the above, students must also abide by the academic policies and procedures of their respective B.S.W., M.S.W., or Ph.D. program. These are listed below, by program.

Communicating issues and concerns

B.S.W. or M.S.W. students who experience issues or identify concerns related to their respective program have several avenues for communicating these. For each of the following areas, the persons whom the student should contact are listed in order of priority.

1. Issues/concerns related to students' academic progress or completing the program as outlined in curriculum plan: student success adviser, director of student success, program director
2. Issues/concerns/suggestions related to field practicum: field instructor, liaison, director of field education
3. Issues/concerns/suggestions related to a specific course and/or instructor: course instructor, student success adviser, program director
4. Issues/concerns/suggestions related to curriculum: student success adviser, program director
5. Issues/concerns/suggestions related to student affairs policies and procedures: student success adviser, director of student success, program director

Additionally, the student associations provide a forum for identifying issues and offering suggestions. Student representatives from each program also serve on school and program committees and meet with the school’s administration on a regular basis throughout the academic year.
B.S.W. Program

Academic standards of the B.S.W. program

Academic standards of the School of Social Work include those related to classroom performance and attendance, as well as ethical and professional conduct. The following are the academic standards of the B.S.W. program:

Requirements for admission to the professional curriculum

1. Earning a minimum cumulative grade point average equal to 2.50
2. Completion of 54 credit hours, including all courses in the pre-professional curriculum
3. Completion of SLWK 201 and SLWK 230 with a minimum grade of B. Students may repeat SLWK 201 or SLWK 230 only once if they fail to earn the minimum required grade on the first attempt

Continuance in the professional curriculum

1. Completion of all 300-level social work courses according to curriculum plan before beginning 400-level courses
2. Earning a minimum grade of C in all required 300- and 400-level social work courses. Students are allowed to repeat any 300- or 400-level social work course in which they fail to earn the minimum required grade only once
3. Adherence to university rules and procedures and the VCU Honor System and all other policies specified in the VCU Insider
4. Adherence to the professional Code of Ethics
5. Completion of provisional or probationary requirements from an admission decision or from a previous review
6. Acceptance into a field agency that provides an appropriate field experience
7. Meeting professional expectations and standards, which includes generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, or demonstrating professional behavior toward colleagues, faculty and staff (at school and field placement)
8. Performing the functions of a social worker, given reasonable accommodations, including using effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional helping relationships

Academic credit is not granted for professional and life experiences

Denial of admission to the B.S.W. program for failure to meet academic standards

Upon appropriate review, a student may be denied admission to the B.S.W. program for:

1. Having below a cumulative grade point average equal to 2.50 at the time of application
2. Completing less than 54 credit hours
3. Not completing all courses in the pre-professional curriculum
4. Completing SLWK 201 and SLWK 230 with a grade of C or lower
Termination from the B.S.W. program for failure to meet academic standards

Upon appropriate review, a student may be dismissed from the B.S.W. program for:

1. Earning a C or below on the second attempt of SLWK 201 or SLWK 230
2. Earning a D or F on the second attempt of any 300- or 400-level social work course.
3. Failing to adhere to university rules and procedures and the VCU Honor System and all other policies specified in the VCU Insider
4. Being found responsible for violating the professional Code of Ethics
5. Failing to fulfill any provisional or probationary requirements from an admission decision or from a previous review
6. Rejection by three or more field agencies if, in the judgment of faculty, the placements can provide appropriate field experiences without undue inconvenience to the student
7. Failing to adhere to professional expectations and standards, including failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, or not demonstrating professional behavior toward colleagues, faculty and staff (at school and field placement)
8. Demonstrating an inability to perform the functions of a social worker, despite reasonable accommodations, including the failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional helping relationships (for example, unable to demonstrate nonjudgmental attitude, unable to allow client self-determination, etc.)

Advising and student success

Student success advisers are concerned with the total experience of the student and serve as a sounding board, adviser, and referral source for academic and personal issues. Student success advisers are the first point-of-contact and primary resource for any issues that may arise during the course of study.

1. Freshmen and lower level students

All freshman students are required to meet with their student success adviser at least two times per semester. Students are to meet with adviser prior to their registration date.

All other lower level students are required to meet with their student success adviser once per semester.

2. All BSW (upper level) students

All BSW (UPPER LEVEL) students are highly encouraged to connect with their student success adviser at least twice per semester.

Any student planning to withdraw from a course(s) is encouraged to meet with their student success adviser prior to the deadline to withdraw with a grade of “W.”
Field education policies and procedures

Partnering with many community agencies, the Department coordinates a field education program for students enrolled in the B.S.W. and M.S.W. programs. Practical field experiences provide opportunities for students to test particular concepts and principles of practice against the realities and demands of actual professional practice. The Field Education Manual contains the necessary information for faculty, liaisons, students, field instructors and agency administrators to understand field education at VCU and to engage in a successful field placement endeavor.
M.S.W. Program

M.S.W. program academic standards

Academic standards of the School of Social Work include those related to classroom performance and attendance, as well as ethical and professional conduct.

The following are the academic standards of the M.S.W. program:

1. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 at the completion of 12 credits, or at the completion of the nine-credit summer session if a student is in the advanced standing program
2. No more than six credits with a C grade, regardless of GPA
3. No grade of D or F regardless of GPA
4. A grade of Pass in field instruction courses
5. Adherence to university rules and procedures and the VCU Honor System and all other policies specified in the VCU Insider
6. Adherence to the professional Code of Ethics
7. Completion of provisional or probationary requirements from an admission decision or from a previous review
8. Acceptance into a field agency that provides an appropriate field experience
9. Meeting professional expectations and standards, which includes generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, or demonstrating professional behavior toward colleagues, faculty and staff (at school and field placement)
10. Performing the functions of a social worker, given reasonable accommodations, including using effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional helping relationships

Academic credit may not be granted for professional or life experience

Termination for failure to meet academic standards of the M.S.W. program

Upon appropriate review, a student may be terminated from the program for:

1. Having a cumulative GPA below 3.00 at the completion of 12 credit hours for regular standing students, or at the completion of the 9 credit hours during the summer session for advanced standing students
2. Earning a grade of C or below in more than six credits, regardless of GPA
3. Earning a grade of D or F in any course, regardless of GPA
4. Receiving a grade of F in a field instruction course, regardless of GPA
5. Failing to adhere to university rules and procedures and the VCU Honor System and all other policies specified in the VCU Insider
6. Being found responsible for violating the professional Code of Ethics.
7. Failing to fulfill provisional or probationary requirements from an admission decision or from a previous review
8. Rejection by three or more field agencies if, in the judgment of faculty, the placements can provide appropriate field experiences without undue inconvenience to the student
9. Failing to adhere to professional expectations and standards, including failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, or not demonstrating professional behavior toward colleagues, faculty and staff (at school and field placement)
10. Demonstrating an inability to perform the functions of a social worker, despite reasonable accommodations, including the failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional helping relationships (for example, unable to demonstrate nonjudgmental attitude, unable to allow client self-determination, etc.)

**Advising and student success**

Student success advisers are concerned with the total experience of the student and serve as a sounding board, adviser, and referral source for academic and personal issues. Student success advisers are the first point-of-contact and primary resource for any issues that may arise during the course of study.

All MSW students are highly encouraged to connect with their student success adviser prior to registration and to the end of the semester. Any student planning to withdraw from a course(s) is encouraged to meet with their student success adviser prior to the deadline to withdraw with a grade of “W.”

**Change of status: Full time/part time**

After consulting with the student success adviser, M.S.W. students must complete and sign a Program Status Change Request Form and updated curriculum planning form if they are interested in moving from full-time to part-time status or part-time to full-time status. Approval of a status change will be contingent upon space availability. Students must contact Financial Aid if they are receiving any form of financial aid when move from full-time to part-time status.

**Structured part-time policies**

Students admitted to the part time format must select a structured curriculum plan from the options provided. Sixty credits are required for the M.S.W. degree unless otherwise noted for M.S.W. options such as a certificate or dual degree. The program is designed so that students complete degree requirements within four years.
On-campus and distance education format

Students may not change on-campus and distance education format after their initial enrollment in the program. Prior to this, a change in format request will be considered on the basis of space availability.

The distance education format requires face to face sessions every semester and students must travel to Richmond for these sessions. In addition, all field instruction placements must be within the Commonwealth of Virginia or metropolitan DC area.

In-person attendance policy for students in the distance education format

The distance education [DE] format of the VCU MSW Program is not exclusively an online program but rather a hybrid model. In addition to a mandatory face to face orientation session at the beginning of the DE program, students are required to attend face-to-face class and meeting sessions that occur on Saturdays twice each semester for the duration of the program. These sessions are not complementary or optional but are a fundamental aspect of the educational experience and curriculum delivery. The work that takes place during these sessions is not available any other time. Students enter and complete the DE format as a cohort. As such, students begin and end together and consequently participate in all classes together. The cohort model allows students to develop peer relationships that form the foundation of the entire educational experience.

From the beginning DE students connect online, but as they gather during Saturday meetings, the relationships are further developed as they participate in activities that include collaborative teamwork, team projects (written and oral), presentations, and experiential activities, such as role plays and videotaping of clinical simulations. These activities require physical presence and interactions that are essential to development of professional social work competencies. Every student that chooses DE must be able to attend and engage in the coursework on Saturdays. No student, for religious reasons or otherwise, is able to have the Saturday requirements waived for the duration of the program.

During the entirety of the distance education [DE] format of the MSW program [4 years or more] there are 16 Saturday face-to-face meetings and 24 classes. In years one and three students have two class meetings each day. In years two and four, students have one class meeting on that day. Students will be permitted no more than six absences out of the 24 required face-to-face class meetings. After six class absences [not days] for any reason, the student’s progress will be automatically reviewed for continuation in the MSW program.

Excused absences from any class are determined at the instructor's discretion and must include documentation of the reason for the absence. No points will be deducted from the student’s course grade for an excused absence. Unexcused absences from the in-person face-to-face classes will result in a 10 point reduction per absence from the final course grade in which the absence occurred. This deduction will be assessed by the relevant course instructor.
Instructors will notify the DE Coordinator of any absence [both excused and unexcused] and provide copies of documentation for the student’s file. Student absences across all courses during the student’s matriculation in the program will be recorded to ensure compliance with the attendance policy.

Field education policies and procedures

Partnering with many community agencies, the Department coordinates a field education program for students enrolled in the B.S.W. and M.S.W. programs. Practical field experiences provide opportunities for students to test particular concepts and principles of practice against the realities and demands of actual professional practice. The Field Education Manual contains the necessary information for faculty, liaisons, students, field instructors and agency administrators to understand field education at VCU and to engage in a successful field placement endeavor.

Field Instruction Grading

Grade of progress (PR) - The grade of PR is an interim grade awarded for SLWK 693 Foundation Field Instruction and SLWK 793 Concentration Field Instruction. Each year’s placement is considered one course (six credits) although placements span two academic semesters and separate registration is required for each semester. The grade of PR is changed to P with credit upon completion of the field instruction placement (SLWK 694 and SLWK 794). If a student does not complete the full course, the student will be required to repeat the entire placement.

The option to complete field in a one-semester block placement is available to part-time students with the approval of the Field Department and the Student Success Advisor. In certain circumstances, a curriculum exception can be made for a full-time student. Students may complete only one (foundation of concentration) of their two required field placements in a Block format.

Grade of pass and fail in field instruction courses (P or F) - The grade of pass (P) is awarded for M.S.W. field instruction courses to denote satisfactory completion of requirements. Courses assigned the grade of P will not be computed in the student’s GPA.

The grade of F denotes unsatisfactory completion of field instruction course requirements. It is given when the student has not demonstrated the level of social work practice, knowledge and skill appropriate for the field instruction course. A student may also receive an F for documented unprofessional behavior. A student may be removed from the field placement agency at any time by the field instructor and field placement agency for either reason. A student removed from the agency under such circumstances will be assigned a grade of F for the field instruction course. A grade of F in a field instruction course results in the student being automatically and immediately dismissed from the M.S.W. program without regard to overall GPA.
Incomplete grades

The School of Social Work requires that all Incomplete grades be awarded in ways that are consistent with the university policy. To be fair to all students who are balancing work, life and academics, the spirit of the policy suggests that Incompletes should be used sparingly in only the most unusual circumstances outside the student’s control. Issues related to ineffective workload management by the student are insufficient, for example. However, an accident, death, or other significant life event in the student’s life might be sufficient depending on the timing and specific circumstances. In every case, an Incomplete Grade Assignment Form is to be fully completed by the instructor, approved by the relevant program director as well as our associate dean for academic affairs. The associate dean then tracks each pending Incomplete and ensures the terms of the agreement are fulfilled. Any instructor submitting an approved Incomplete form is agreeing to supervise the completion of student work and the posting of grades in ways consistent with this policy.

As noted in the university policy, schools are allowed to set more stringent timelines for completion than VCU does and the School of Social Work has determined that it will do so. In order to honor the assumptions of the importance of foundational coursework, course sequencing and prerequisites, the School of Social Work requires that all incomplete grades in all courses be graded by the instructor by the end of the second full week of classes in the semester immediately following the awarding of the Incomplete (second summer session, fall, spring). This policy assumes three semesters in a given year and notes any week with less than five days of classes is not a full week.

Each semester, the associate dean for academic affairs will notify faculty of the last date for submitting grades for the previous semester’s Incompletes. The university policy allows for extensions to this, but only upon prior approval by the instructor and the dean, or, in our case, the program director and associate dean. Extensions are considered only with documented evidence of extenuating circumstances and must be requested in writing seven calendar days prior to the deadline for completing pending work. When the deadline established for completing pending work arrives, the instructor shall calculate the final grade based on all completed work to date. Work not completed by the due date is awarded zero points in the calculation of the final grade.

Student course load and credit hours

For purposes of tuition, fees, and financial aid, the university classifies graduate students as full-time when enrolled in nine or more credit hours. For programmatic and curricular planning purposes, the School of Social Work requires 15 credit hours for student completing the program on a full-time basis and 6 credit hours for part-time.
Course waiver policy for new M.S.W. students

Students may request course waivers if they can demonstrate they have satisfactorily completed an equivalent course(s). Students must present evidence of content equivalency to the M.S.W. program director and have earned “A” or “B” grades in the course that are the basis for the waiver request. These courses must have been completed within the last five years and do not have to be social work courses. A portfolio process is used to assess equivalency. Graduate students from non-M.S.W. programs, B.S.W. graduates not in the advanced standing program and students holding a B.A., B.S. or other undergraduate degree may be waived from no more than three foundation courses.

Graduate students transferring from another accredited M.S.W. program may be waived from all foundation courses. As part of the application process for admission, transfer students from other accredited M.S.W. programs must submit course syllabi, as well as field practicum evaluations if they have completed a field placement. M.S.W. course credit may be granted if graduate transfer courses are found to be equivalent.

A course waiver does not result in an award of credit. Course credit hours can only be awarded through transfer of graduate courses. Students who are granted waivers must take elective courses to replace the credits from which they have been waived. Students should consult with their adviser and/or the M.S.W. program director regarding appropriate electives. Students must complete an equivalency portfolio form and submit it to the M.S.W. program director, along with available course syllabi and available written assignments and tests the student completed to satisfy requirements in the courses viewed as equivalent. These materials must be submitted by July 15 for waiver requests of SLWK 601 for fall and by October 15 for waiver of SLWK 610 and/or SLWK 609 offered in the spring semester. Waiver requests for students seeking to waive a summer semester of SLWK 609 are due by April 15th of each year.

The director, in consultation with faculty members as needed, will review transcripts and portfolios. To request the equivalency portfolio form and instructions, the student should contact the M.S.W. program office. There is a separate portfolio form for each of the specified foundation courses.

To request forms contact Jackie Maroney (804) 828-1041; Email: jmaroney@vcu.edu

Transfer of Credit

Students may request that graduate credits granted at another college or university or by other departments of VCU be applied to the credits necessary for the M.S.W. degree. The course must have been a graduate-level course that was not applied toward another graduate degree and in which the student received a grade of either “A” or “B.”

Courses presented for transfer for required M.S.W. elective credits must meet the following criteria:
1. Expand the required M.S.W. course content.
2. Not substantially duplicate the content of required program courses or other elective courses offered by the program.
3. Relate to or be required by a grant or external funding source.
4. Be required for a certificate or combined degree program.
5. Are service courses to other graduate programs.
6. All course work applied to the degree, including transfer credit, shall not be more than seven years old at the time the requirements for the M.S.W. degree have been completed.
7. No more than 30 credits will be accepted in transfer from another accredited M.S.W. program. No more than six credits will be accepted in transfer from other graduate programs.

In order to implement transfer of credits, the student must:

1. Apply to the M.S.W. Program.
2. Submit to the M.S.W. Program director course outlines and descriptions and other documents that verify award of credit from another institution or department.
3. Furnish an official transcript specifying the grade(s) received.

If an M.S.W. field practicum is requested to transfer, the field evaluation must be provided and show completion of the entire foundation M.S.W. field course(s). Students transferring social work courses must provide a letter from the accredited school that they left the program in good standing.

Applicants requesting transfer of 12 or more credits from an accredited M.S.W. program must apply for admission on or before Oct. 15 for spring admission consideration.

The M.S.W. Program director will notify the student of the decision and send copies to the adviser and student folder and the off-campus director for Northern Virginia students.
Ph.D. Program

Academic standards of the Ph.D. program

Academic standards of the School of Social Work include those related to classroom performance and attendance, as well as ethical and professional conduct. The following are the academic standards of the Ph.D. program:

1. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00
2. No more than one grade of C in any attempted coursework
3. No grade of D or F in any attempted coursework
4. A grade of P in SWKD 898 (dissertation research) following any semester in which the student previously attempted and earned a grade of U in this course
5. No more than two grades of U in SWKD 898, whether they are consecutive or not
6. Passing all areas of the written and oral comprehensive examination on first or second attempt as determined by pass/fail vote of the Comprehensive Examination Committee
7. Successful defense of dissertation project as determined by vote of the dissertation committee
8. Meeting professional expectations and standards, which includes generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for doctoral education, or demonstrating professional behavior toward colleagues, faculty and staff, including adherence to VCU Honor System, Code of Ethics, and other university and student policies listed in the VCU Insider
9. Performing the functions of a doctoral student, given reasonable accommodations, including using effective interpersonal skills

Termination for failure to meet academic standards of the Ph.D. program

Upon appropriate review, a student may be terminated from the program for:

1. Having a cumulative GPA that drops below a 3.0
2. Earning a second grade of C
3. Earning a grade of D or F
4. Earning a grade of “U” for dissertation research (SWKD 898) in two consecutive semesters
5. Earning more than two non-consecutive grades of U in SWKD 898
6. Failing to pass any or all areas of the comprehensive examination on the second attempt as determined by pass/fail vote of the Comprehensive Examination Committee
7. Failing to successfully defend dissertation research as determined by vote of the dissertation committee
8. Failing to successfully complete the dissertation research within eight (8) years from the date of PhD program enrollment
9. Failing to adhere to professional expectations and standards, including failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite
for doctoral education, or not demonstrating professional behavior toward colleagues, faculty and staff including lack of adherence to VCU Honor System, Code of Ethics, and other university and student policies listed in the VCU Insider.

10. Demonstrating an inability to perform the functions of a doctoral student, despite reasonable accommodations, including the failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills

Advising

Upon enrollment, the Ph.D. program director assigns each new student a faculty adviser who will follow her or him for the first year in the program. The faculty adviser is responsible for assisting the student in planning a program of study that meets degree requirements and helps build the student's specialized areas of scholarly interest. The focus is also on individual guidance and mentorship of students through the processes of registration, orientation and the transition to Ph.D. level work.

Faculty advisers also facilitate conversations about whether, and to what extent, students may become involved in other academic activities such as teaching, university programs and community service. In addition, the faculty adviser may help to connect students to other faculty in the school and university with similar interests. At the end of the first year, also in consultation with the Ph.D. program director and faculty adviser, students may continue with their faculty adviser or select another consenting faculty member. Once a student is admitted to candidacy, the chair of the student’s dissertation committee serves as faculty adviser.

GRA Q&A and guidelines

For graduate research assistantship information, please see GRA Q&A and guidelines.

Guidelines for funding Ph.D. student travel

The School of Social Work has established the following guidelines for making decisions related to funding Ph.D. students to travel to conferences where they are presenting a paper or engaging in official school business. The school will support students financially who meet these criteria to defer their expenses based on the availability of funds.

A fair distribution of these funds ensures that 1) all students have an opportunity to be supported for presentations at the primary social work conferences and 2) student requests for support to present at additional conferences receive fair consideration. Students are to work with their advisers to develop their plan for conference presentations early in the school year and to submit that plan to the doctoral program director for review. Specific requests for student travel support will be considered within the context of the overall student travel plan for the program.

Funding guidelines:

1. The presentation must be based on a paper, and the student must be first author or share equal authorship.
2. It must be a juried presentation – whatever format the presentation takes (e.g., paper presentation, poster session), there has to be a competitive selection process.
3. The presentation must concern something that was done in conjunction with the student’s Ph.D. work.
4. The student must be a major participant in the presentation
5. The student has an overall plan for conference presentations on file and this presentation fits within his/her overall plan

Procedure for requesting funding:

1. A letter (email) requesting the funding with details on how the student meets each of the criteria outlined above is submitted to the program director. The student also must indicate if, and when, he/she has previously received conference travel funding from the school.
2. The program director reviews the request, provides a written response to the student. When a request is approved, the maximum amount of support will be indicated.
3. The student then seeks formal approval through the established university process for obtaining pre-travel authorization and makes his or her own travel arrangements.

In the event that there is not enough money to support all students who meet the minimal criteria, students who have not previously been funded would have the highest priority.

Incomplete grades

The assignment of incomplete grades is reserved for those instances when outside circumstances, such as major illness or life events, prohibit the student from completing coursework within a semester’s usual timeframe. It is not appropriately used due to unforeseen delays in research implementation or to offset the student’s time management issues. It is used when withdrawing from a course(s) is deemed inappropriate for the circumstances and there is reasonable chance the student can complete the work in a timely manner.

When an I grade is assigned by the professor, an Incomplete Grade form must be completed and signed by the student and the faculty member (forms are available from the program assistant). A copy of the form must be filed in the student’s file in the doctoral program office. Incomplete grades must be removed by the end of classes in the semester following the semester in which they are given. A student with six hours or more of I will not be permitted to register for additional courses until at least one or both I grades are removed. Students are not eligible for their Comprehensive Examination prior to removal of all I grades by June 30 prior to the exam administration in September. Please refer to the VCU Graduate Bulletin for more information.

Time status and Residency

While part-time study is possible for some part of the doctoral education experience, one year of full-time study is required at some point during the course work phase of the program. “One year” is specifically defined as two semesters in a row with at least nine credits each. There is no requirement to actually reside in Richmond.

Student progress and continuation evaluation

As noted above, planning for a program of study to acquire content area knowledge is done by the student in collaboration with a faculty adviser. This planning is completed prior to the completion of the 20 core curriculum credit hours and can be recorded on the Ph.D. Program Planning/Assessment Form. A copy of the form is forwarded to the Ph.D. program director and becomes a part of the student’s permanent file. Students also complete a self-assessment at the end of their first year.
Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive examinations are taken in the month of September after the successful completion of all coursework. Students have one opportunity to repeat the entire exam, or any one or two areas of it. Students who do not pass on a second attempt are dismissed from the program and are not eligible for readmission. Students who pass the exam continue to degree candidacy.

Purpose and eligibility

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to provide a vehicle through which students can demonstrate their ability to integrate the whole of their educational experience by adequately addressing complex questions pertinent to the current and developing knowledge base of the profession of social work.

A student is eligible to take the comprehensive examination upon evidence that they have successfully completed the 38 credits of required course work.

All I grades must be removed by June 30 prior to exam administration in September in order for the student’s eligibility to be valid.

The examination must be taken in the fall semester immediately after completion of their 38 credits of required course work. If coursework is not complete by June 30, the exam must be taken one year later.

The examination will be administered once yearly, in early September. If a student must repeat any or all areas, a retake examination will be scheduled for the following January. This time is only for retakes and cannot be used for a first administration of the examination.

Students have one opportunity to repeat the entire examination, or any one or two areas of it.

In cases where all three examination areas must be repeated, a full year of study may be granted upon request.

To the extent possible, the student’s original examination committee will administer the retake examination.

Failure to pass any or all areas of a retaken examination will result in termination from the program.

Comprehensive Examination Committee

A total of five graduate faculty members make up each eligible student’s Comprehensive Examination Committee. Late in the fall semester of every other academic year, the Ph.D. program director, in consultation with members of the Doctoral Program Committee and the dean, appoints a chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee and two additional committee members to serve one two-year term beginning the following January. These three members are called the “core committee” and
specifically serve for two administrations of the examination over two consecutive Septembers, and any retakes, if relevant.

Additionally, each student taking the examination will nominate two examination committee members to represent the student’s substantive area, bringing his or her total examination committee to the required five members. One of the student-nominated members must be from the School of Social Work, and the other from another unit within the university.

Areas of the examination

The comprehensive examination poses questions requiring written responses in three areas:

1. Philosophical bases of knowledge building in social work; social, behavioral, and micro and macro practice theories (henceforth referred to as “theory”)
2. Research and data analysis
3. The student’s declared substantive area of study (henceforth referred to as “substantive area”)

Areas one and two constitute the “core” examination and the questions are the same for all students. Substantive area questions are unique for each student.

All questions will require the student to demonstrate accuracy and thoroughness of response; clarity, organization, flow and logic in writing; knowledge of the literature, including major ideas, concepts and authors; and sensitivity to social work principles, ethics, values and the promotion of social justice.

Within three weeks following the written examination, all committee members and the student gather face-to-face for the “oral” portion of the examination. The oral portion of the examination assesses the student’s ability to clarify and expand their written responses, communicate complex material orally, to think critically and analytically in dialogue, and in general, extends the above criteria into the realm of verbal discourse. The oral examination begins with a 20 minute opening statement by the student.

Development of the questions

The chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee will be responsible for obtaining draft questions in each area from members of the student’s examination committee.

Members of the core committee will be responsible for reviewing and finalizing the questions in each area of the examination.

Research and theory questions will integrate content from the required doctoral course work. Substantive questions will encompass a social problem area as well as the broad social policy and practice context.

Each student will prepare a bibliography that covers these major components of their stated substantive area; the bibliography will assist the committee in drafting individualized questions in the substantive area of the examination.

Specific procedures
In the month of March, prior to the scheduled date of the written examination the following fall, the student submits to the program director and chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee, 1) a formal statement of intent to sit for the examinations, 2) an up-to-date vita, and 3) nominations for the student’s two appointed committee members.

Students will meet with their nominated committee members prior to the examination to discuss their substantive area and practice focus.

1. According to the specific calendar for a given year, the student also must prepare and distribute a bibliography that represents the substantive and practice focus areas for which the student will be responsible on the written and oral examination.
2. The student should include an introductory paragraph with the bibliography that describes and explains her/his substantive and practice focus areas; faculty may add to this bibliography.
3. This process must be completed early in the spring semester before the scheduled examination in the following fall.
4. The student must submit a copy of their bibliography to all members of their Comprehensive Examination Committee.

The written examination will be given on three successive, or close to successive, days in four-hour sessions, in the following order: 1) theory, 2) research and data analysis, and 3) substantive area.

The written part of the core examination will be given on the same days for all students taking the examination that semester. At each examination period, the core questions will be identical for all students. All questions will include written criteria for the basis of evaluation.

In each written examination session, the student will select and prepare a written answer to two of three possible questions.

Students are encouraged to compose his or her answers on computer (computers and diskettes will be supplied by the school).

1. Responses should have a header with student’s name, name of the comp, and page numbering using the “page x of y” feature (View > Header and Footer> Insert Auto Text> Page x of y).
2. Responses may be composed using single-space if preferred, but prior to finalizing, answers must be converted to double-space format.
3. Students either copy their answers onto a thumb drive supplied by the committee chairperson (or his/her designee) or email their examination answers, as a PDF attachment, to the designated faculty or staff person.
4. The Ph.D. program assistant will submit print copies from all segments of the written examination to the Comprehensive Examination Committee chairperson, or designee, within two working days of the last day of the comprehensive examination.

No resource material will be allowed in the written portion of the examination. However, students’ written examination responses used in preparation for the oral examination may be brought into the oral portion of the examination, along with one page of personal notes.

The use of all electronic devices (including, but not limited to, CD players, iPods or any type of MP3 player or similar device) during the written administration of the examination is prohibited.
Both the written and oral examinations will take place at the university. For the oral examination, members of the student’s committee will participate as a committee of the whole.

1. The oral portion of the examination will be administered as soon as possible, but within four weeks of completion of the written examination.
2. The oral examination will be scheduled for two hours.
3. Oral examination questions will focus on material from all areas of the written examination.
4. It is anticipated that students will use the time between the written and oral portion of the examination preparing to verbally clarify their written answers and to fill in any gaps that they may identify.
5. Students may not consult with anyone during this process. This does not, however, preclude the student from submitting general questions in writing to the chair concerning procedural matters, or to the Ph.D. program director, concerning policy matters related to the examination.

Answers to all areas of the examination are read and evaluated by all committee members.

1. No grade is assigned for the written portion prior to the oral examination, but a pass/fail vote is taken on each of the three areas at the conclusion of the oral portion of the examination.
2. The vote in each area represents the final assessment of the student’s performance on both the written and the oral portions in whichever attempt is being assessed (first or retake).
3. A majority vote (3/5) will determine if the student has passed each of the three examination areas.
4. The committee will verbally notify the student of the results of the vote at the conclusion of the oral examination.
5. In addition to the vote, the committee will give the student oral evaluative comments about the examination.
6. If a student fails any portion of the examination, the chairperson, with consultation from the other members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee, will subsequently prepare written comments that summarize the major concerns of the committee.
7. These written comments will be forwarded to the student no more than two weeks after the completion of the oral examination.

The chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee will notify the program director in writing whether the student passed or failed the examination.

If a student fails portions of the Comprehensive Examination, the student retakes only the portion(s) failed: theory, research and data analysis, or the student’s declared substantive area.

1. Students retaking “core” sections of the examination (that is, theory or research and data analysis) will respond to new versions of the questions prepared by the core comprehensive committee.
2. If the student does retake any examination at the time of a regular full administration in September, their questions in the areas of research and theory may be the same as those questions prepared for students taking the comprehensive examination for the first time.
3. For students retaking the substantive area, members of the student’s comprehensive committee will formulate new substantive area questions.
The Comprehensive Examination Committee chair will serve as a resource person to students to clarify policies and procedures concerning the examination, consulting with the program director as needed.

Requests for exceptions or waivers of these procedures must be directed to the program director in writing, and signed by the student, her or his adviser, and the Comprehensive Examination Committee chair. The program director will recommend an action to the dean and the dean will make a final decision. The dean will inform the student, Comprehensive Examination Committee chair, and program director in writing of the decision.

Appeal of a failed comprehensive examination, upon first or second attempt, must be put in writing and submitted to the program director within 20 days of the receipt of the written notification from the program director of the Comprehensive Examination Committee’s decision. The student assumes the burden of proof and appeals must be based on clear and convincing evidence that the student was treated inequitably or that the assessment of the examination outcome was inaccurate. The program director will rule on the appeal and submit her or his decision in writing to the student as soon as possible. If the student wishes to take the appeal further, the program director will forward all materials to the dean of the School of Social Work for his or her decision. There is no further avenue for appeal beyond the dean.

**Admission to candidacy**

A student is admitted to candidacy when the program director certifies, in writing, that all pre-dissertation degree requirements, including Comprehensive Examinations, have been satisfied and the student is prepared to proceed with the dissertation.

Additionally, the Admission to Master’s or Doctoral Degree Candidacy form must be signed by the student certifying that he/she has read and understands the policies regarding research involving human or animal subjects and continuous enrollment requirements. The Ph.D. Program Assistant prepares the form and forwards to the student for his/her signature, and the signature of his/her major adviser. The program assistant then forwards the document to the Ph.D. Program Director, the Dean of the School of Social Work and the Dean of the Graduate School for their official signatures, completing the admission to candidacy process. Copies of the fully executed form are forwarded to the student and his/her adviser; the original is retained in the student’s file in the Ph.D. Program office.

**Dissertation**

After admission to candidacy, students will proceed to propose, complete and defend their dissertation. Students are required to maintain continuous enrollment (summer semesters excluded) in SWKD 898 Dissertation Research until completion of the dissertation requirement. A minimum of three credit hours per semester are required until 12 credits are accumulated, after which only one credit per semester is required. The dissertation must represent independent research, and should be based on an original research question or hypothesis. All students should be familiar with the VCU Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines and the Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Manual prior to beginning work on their dissertation.

*Dissertation Committee*
Upon successful completion of the Comprehensive Exams, the student will submit his/her Dissertation Committee nominations in writing to the Program Director. Typically, the student chooses a chair first and works with her/him to choose the additional members based on faculty expertise, or previous association or collaboration. Student nominations should include a brief rationale for the selection of each faculty member. Dissertation committees consist of a minimum of four (but not more than five) graduate faculty members. The dissertation chair must be a member of the faculty of the School of Social Work and have previously served as a member on at least one School of Social Work dissertation committee. At least one member of the Dissertation Committee must be a graduate faculty member from a department other than the School of Social Work however the majority of the committee must be comprised of School of Social Work faculty members. Some students elect to appoint Ph.D. scholars and practitioners from outside the university with permission. In these cases, a letter of explanation and a copy of the person’s vita is required. The Program Director clears such appointments with Graduate Studies and provides written approval of the Dissertation Committee’s appointment.

Dissertation Standards

Generally, all dissertations will demonstrate the student’s ability to conduct empirical research, adhering to canons of (1) logic in conceptualization and design, (2) valid and reliable/trustworthy measurement, (3) appropriate analytic techniques, and (4) appropriate interpretation of results. Dissertation studies should be based on or draw from a formal theoretical or conceptually explicit framework for investigating a question or testing a hypothesis relevant to the human service field.

Dissertation proposals

A dissertation proposal must be developed and submitted to the Dissertation Committee. The proposal defines the problem to be studied and justifies the choice of subject and its relevance with respect to the student’s program. It should contain an overview of the literature (current state of knowledge in the area), the research question(s), the proposed methodology, and a data analysis plan. In general, the proposal should be long enough to clearly indicate what the student plans to study, including rationale and procedure, but not so exhaustive as to preclude the possibility and/or necessity of submitting a series of proposals or proposal revisions prior to gaining Committee approval to proceed.

Following a successful formal defense of the proposal with the student’s committee, all members of the committee must sign the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form. Prior to the proposal defense date, the Program Assistant will prepare the Ph.D. Program in Social Work Dissertation Proposal Approval Form and submit to the chair of the committee. The chair must provide copies of the signed approval form to the student and the Program Director.

Typically the student then moves toward completion and submission of all necessary forms to the VCU Committee on the Conduct of Human Research immediately following the dissertation proposal.

Dissertation grading

At the beginning of each semester in which the student is registered for any number of dissertation credits, he or she, in collaboration with his/her respective adviser formulates a plan and develops a timeline for making substantial progress toward completion of the dissertation. Dissertation work is graded each semester by the student’s adviser, who is the dissertation chair if the committee has been formally appointed. An “S” is assigned if the student substantially fulfills the commitments reflected in
the semester’s planned timeline. A “U” means the student has not satisfied those objectives in some way. If a student in the doctoral program receives a grade of “U” for dissertation research (SWKD 898) two consecutive semesters or accumulates three “U”s” non-consecutively, the student is immediately terminated from the program. An “F” is assigned in cases where work on the dissertation or collaboration with the adviser is abandoned. A student earning this grade is immediately terminated from the program per university policy.

The Ph.D. Program Flowchart outlines important milestones in the dissertation process which might represent “substantial progress.” These include submission of nominations for committee membership to the Ph.D. program director (expected to occur within three to six months of admission into candidacy), the submission of drafts of certain chapters to the dissertation chair or members of the committee, the submission of a proposal to the dissertation chair and/or committee members, and/or defense of a completed proposal (expected to occur within a year and a half of admission to candidacy), submission of forms to the VCU Office for the Protection of Research Subjects, or setting an oral defense date for the dissertation (expected to occur within two to three years of admission to candidacy).

Dissertation and Final Defense

Once the proposal is approved, the chair and committee establish procedures for the review of subsequent material submitted by the student. Various options are possible, ranging from a central role for the chair in reviewing material and working with the student on revisions prior to forwarding to the rest of the committee, to full committee participation and feedback in reviewing every chapter of the dissertation as it is written.

The dissertation must be in the format specified in the VCU Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines. When the final draft has been submitted and reviewed by the committee, the committee will plan with the student for the final oral defense of the dissertation. The defense is usually scheduled for two hours. All members of the school faculty, doctoral students and VCU graduate faculty are invited to attend. Questioning is generally limited to the dissertation topic and research.

Beginning in 2009, only electronic media storage of dissertations is required by the university. However, while the university no longer requires bound dissertation volumes, the School of Social Work requires the student to provide one bound copy for the school at his/her expense. Also view the VCU Libraries thesis and dissertation information.

Prior to the defense date, the Ph.D. program assistant will prepare and submit two copies of the VCU Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (ETD) Approval Form to the chair of the committee. The dissertation committee members, program director and the dean of the School of Social Work sign the form after the successful defense of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate is responsible for obtaining the signature of the dean of the Graduate School. The required forms, with signatures affixed, must be submitted with the dissertation to James Branch Cabell Library for electronic media storage.

The student is required to provide one bound copy of the dissertation to the School of Social Work. A list of commercial binders is provided on the Graduate School website. Submit the signature forms and dissertation to the binding company of your choice for processing.

In order to assist with the school’s Ph.D. Program assessment and evaluation plan, students must also submit a Dissertation Completion Form to the Ph.D. program director using the following on-line
Qualtrix survey instrument. The program director’s signature on the dissertation is contingent upon receipt of the responses to six questions that connect the completion of the project to the program’s six learning objectives.

Many of the steps toward dissertation defense and graduation occur simultaneously. It is incumbent upon the student to review and become familiar with the dissertation and graduation requirements and the pertinent due dates set forth by the school and the university.