Sandra Rosenbaum
School of Social Work
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Social Welfare PhD

Program Handbook

2025-2026

Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for PhD students in the Social Welfare Program.

Welcome

Welcome to the Social Welfare PhD Program at the UW-Madison Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work! We are delighted for you to join us. Our doctoral program strives to develop social work scholars, leaders, and educators who will advance knowledge about social work, social welfare policy, and intervention strategies to enhance human well-being and promote human rights and social and economic justice. As a doctoral student in our department, you can expect rigorous interdisciplinary research training, strong faculty mentoring, and a vibrant graduate student community. We are looking forward to getting to know you and working with you!

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PhD Program Director
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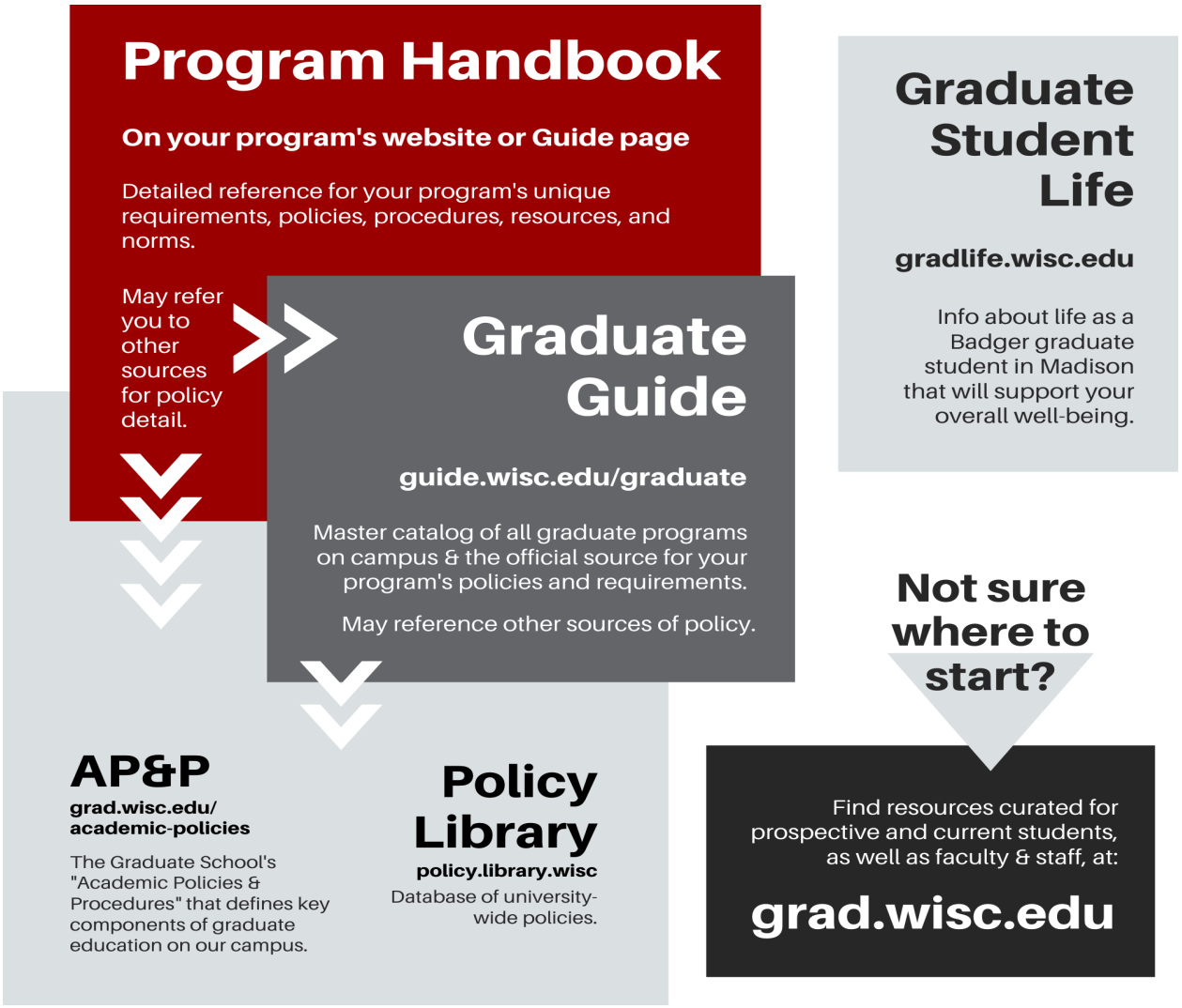
Navigating Policy and Resources at UW-Madison

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at UW-Madison:



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How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is intended for graduate students pursuing a PhD in Social Welfare from the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work and is meant to be a comprehensive resource of departmental policies, procedures, and values.

Who to Contact with Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed above. People in several key positions in the School of Social Work and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

PhD Program Chair

The PhD Program is chaired by a faculty member appointed by the Director of the School. The Chair is responsible to the Director of the School and to the PhD faculty (i.e., those tenured or on the tenure track). The PhD Chair supervises and coordinates the administration of the PhD Program and leads the PhD Committee.

Among the domains of responsibility of the PhD Chair and PhD Committee are recruitment efforts and the PhD admissions process, PhD student awards, and planning professional development and social activities for PhD students. The PhD Chair orients students to the PhD program and oversees the maintenance of graduate student records and the annual student evaluation process. The PhD Chair provides periodic reports on the program and data to the Director of the School of Social Work and Dean of the Graduate School. When students have questions about their course of study, they should first consult with their Temporary Advisor/Major Professor and then reach out to the PhD Chair if additional guidance is needed. The PhD Chair is available as a point of contact for PhD students and advisors when questions or concerns arise, or resources are needed.

PhD Program Coordinator

The Chair of the PhD Program is assisted by the PhD Program Coordinator. The Coordinator plays a role with issues and support including satisfactory academic progress, academic deadlines, graduation completion, admissions, program-related forms, advising/course holds and permissions, and course offerings. In addition, the Coordinator provides direct assistance to faculty advisors, students, and the PhD Committee.

Students should always reference the program's website, this Program Handbook, the Graduate School's website (grad.wisc.edu), and the Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (https://grad.wisc.edu/academic-policies/) for answers to various program-related questions. However, when students need further clarification on any of these policies or procedures, they should contact the Coordinator.

PhD Program Faculty

The PhD Program Faculty includes tenured and tenure track faculty, as well as faculty affiliates from outside of the School of Social Work. The PhD faculty act as Temporary Advisors and Major Professors for PhD students. The PhD faculty typically meets as a "committee of the

whole" twice an academic year to discuss matters relevant to the PhD Program. The ongoing activities of the PhD Program are relegated to the PhD Committee.

The name and contact information of your faculty advisor can be found on your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors."

PhD Committee

This committee, under the direction of the PhD Chair, functions as an advisory committee to the PhD faculty and implements the policies and procedures for the doctoral program that have been ratified by the PhD faculty. In addition to the PhD Chair, two faculty members sit on the PhD Committee. Two students sit on the PhD Committee with two student votes. Student representatives are appointed by the PhD Committee Chair early in the fall semester. Tudent representatives participate fully in PhD Committee meetings except for closed portions where the progress of individual students is discussed. A draft agenda is distributed prior to each committee of the whole and PhD committee meeting. Minutes of the meetings are available to all PhD faculty members.

Graduate School Services

For general inquiries and graduate student services from the Graduate School, see the operations and front desk contact information on this contact page: grad.wisc.edu/contacts.

Department & Program Overview

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work prioritizes equity and inclusion work in all areas. Cultural humility, anti-oppressive practice, and social justice are values central to the profession of social work and our school. We seek to enhance human well-being and promote human rights as well as social and economic justice to achieve an equitable, healthy, and productive society. To do so requires understanding and dismantling personal biases (unconscious and conscious) and systemic injustices within our society and school.

Our Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is supported by student, faculty, and staff efforts to meet the following priority goals:

- Goal 1: Increase the diversity of our students, staff, faculty, and other governing bodies.
- Goal 2: Improve a sense of inclusion for our students, staff, and faculty.
- Goal 3: Equip our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and social work community partners to be social justice leaders who can address diversity, equity, and inclusion in their lives and careers.

Updates, events, and news can be seen on our Striving for Equity page at: https://socwork.wisc.edu/striving-for-equity/

How to Get Involved

As a graduate student at UW-Madison, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement often enhances your academic, professional, and personal growth through developing advanced leadership,

communication, and collaboration skills. It also provides an opportunity for professional networking.

In Our Discipline

For students, the following opportunities exist:

- **Associated Students of Madison (ASM)** - The Associated Students of Madison (ASM) is composed of roughly 50 elected or appointed students, 50 student employees, 12 professional staff members, and 200 student appointees on committees that hold legal rights to recommend university policies, budgets, and candidates for UW employment. ASM allocates approximately $51 million in segregated university fees each year and is responsible for management of the Student Activity Center, distribution of the student bus pass, and the day-to-day operations of StudentPrint. ASM is not a Registered Student Organization. The roles of ASM can be divided into three categories: direct action, governance, and service. Learn more here: asm.wisc.edu/
- **Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)-** Full-time students in bachelor's, master's or doctoral programs in social work or social welfare are eligible for a student membership to SSWR. Along with resources provided through the Doctoral Student Center, SSWR membership includes reduced conference registration fees, job posting service, access to the SWRNet, and more. Learn more about SSWR here: secure.sswr.org/
- **Teaching Assistants' Association (TAA)** - The Teaching Assistants' Association is the labor union representing all graduate student workers at UW–Madison (TAs, PAs, RAs, GAs, and Fellows). They are the oldest graduate employee union in the world. Organizing began in 1966, and the first contract with the university was completed in 1970. Learn more here: taa-madison.org/

In Our Program/Department

Students are invited to join social work organizations, organize their own student organizations (visit the Center for Leadership and Involvement for more information), and join standing committees of the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work.

School of Social Work Student Organizations include:

- LGBTA+ Allies
- Radical Social Work
- Social Work Christian Fellowship
- Social Work Student Union
- Social Workers of Color Student Coalition
- Students for Social Welfare

For more details, visit: https://socwork.wisc.edu/students/student-involvement/

On Campus & In the Community

- The Wisconsin Idea is the principle that education should influence and improve people's lives beyond the university classroom. For more than 100 years, this idea has guided the university's work.
- You will find a list of ways to engage in campus and local community life at:**The Graduate School's Current Student Page** grad.wisc.edu/current-students

- If you are a student actively involved in leadership and service activities, consider nominating yourself for membership in the following honor society: **Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society** grad.wisc.edu/diversity/bouchet

Getting Started as a Graduate Student

This section guides you through important steps to take as you begin your journey as a graduate student at UW-Madison.

- Be sure to review all steps listed on this webpage for new graduate students: **The Graduate School's New Student Page** grad.wisc.edu/new-students
    - In addition to a checklist for all new graduate students, that webpage includes sections with additional steps to take if you are a new international student, student with a disability, student veteran, student with children, or student with funding.
- In Our Program: Incoming students to the Social Welfare Program should refer to their Welcome Letter (sent mid-late summer) for steps to take as a new student.

Advising & Mentoring

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike.

The Graduate School's definition of an advisor can be found here: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232.

Upon admission, each student is assigned to a "temporary faculty advisor" whose research interests correspond broadly with the student's interests. The role of the temporary advisor is to mentor students at the beginning of their program, assist students in selecting required and elective courses for the first year, and advise students on research and curricular issues as they explore and refine their research area and choose a Major Professor (permanent faculty advisor). Often, the temporary advisor becomes the Major Professor, but this is not necessarily the case. Both the student and advisor are responsible for making their expectations clear to each other. Discuss expectations with your advisor.

Advising Contract

The University holds advisors and students accountable for the following responsibilities as part of an advising compact. Below are the general guidelines.

Students are responsible for:

- Knowing the requirements of your particular academic program, selecting courses that meet those requirements in an appropriate time frame, and monitoring progress towards graduation
- Consulting with the appropriate advisor to handle questions and concerns
- Scheduling and keeping academic advising appointments in a timely manner
- Being prepared for advising appointments (for example: come prepared with a list of questions or concerns, have a tentative schedule of classes in mind, and/or come prepared to discuss interests / goals with the advisor)

Advisors are responsible for:

- Assisting students to clarify their values, goals, and academic potential
- Providing information about educational options, requirements, policies, & procedures
- Helping students plan educational programs consistent with the requirements of their degree program and with their own goals, interests, and abilities

- Assisting students in the continual monitoring and evaluation of their educational progress
- Helping students to locate and integrate the many resources of the University to meet their unique needs and aspirations

Selecting a Major Professor (Permanent Faculty Advisor)

Your Major Professor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and project/research interests match closely with those that you intend to acquire, and with whom you can establish a productive and supportive working relationship. Faculty in the School of Social Work and faculty affiliates are eligible to serve as Major Professor. Students are required to select a Major Professor by the end of the fall semester of the second year.

Your Major Professor has two main roles:

1) To assist you in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field by helping the student select appropriate elective and required courses to move the student toward preparation for their prelim and dissertation research; identifying appropriate courses that the student should take outside the School; helping the student refine their preliminary exam and dissertation topics, and identifying appropriate faculty from within and outside the School of Social Work to serve on the student's preliminary exam and dissertation committees.

2) to chair the committee that will determine whether you have performed at an acceptable level in each of your degree milestones (see "Degree Requirements" section below for further information on building your committee).

To learn more about the faculty in your program, consider consulting the following sources:

- Courses and seminars you attend
- Our program website (https://socwork.wisc.edu/directory-faculty/)
- Faculty publications
- Students currently in a prospective advisor's group/lab

Additionally, you may wish to have a discussion with a prospective advisor. Below are some questions to consider asking in this discussion. You should spend some time identifying what is most important to you in your graduate training and ask questions accordingly.

Questions to Ask of Prospective Advisors

Adapted from IPiB handbook

- What research opportunities would be available to me if we were to work together?
- Would these projects expose me to a variety of different approaches?
- In general, how available will you be to answer questions I might have?
- What is your philosophy regarding the amount of guidance the advisor should provide to a student during coursework, the process of the preliminary examination, the dissertation, etc.?
- Do you encourage your students to attend seminars and work with faculty outside of their narrow field of interest/research?
- How do you support students to develop their program of research and learn to publish in academic journals and present at academic conferences?
- Do you include your doctoral students in professional activities that will familiarize them with their field of interest/research, such as reviewing manuscripts and meeting with visiting speakers?
- How long do you think it should take me to get my degree?
- What are your former doctoral students (if any) doing now?

- What is your general philosophy of doctoral training and what goals do you have for your doctoral students?

No faculty member is obligated to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, though invitations are often accepted unless the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve your needs better.

Once the decision for a Major Professor has been finalized, the student must notify the PhD Program Coordinator, who makes the necessary notations in the student's record.

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you encounter issues in your relationship with your advisor or you decide to transition to working with a different advisor, discuss it with the PhD Chair.

Every graduate student must have an advisor, or they may be suspended from graduate study at UW-Madison by the Graduate School. You can confirm that the name of your advisor has been updated in the official record by looking in your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors."

A Graduate Student Guide to Working with Faculty Advisors

Through this interactive, self-paced micro-course, graduate students learn about the characteristics of functional and dysfunctional relationships with faculty advisors, strategies for communicating effectively and aligning expectations, as well as program grievance processes and Hostile and Intimidating Behavior resources. Completion of the micro-course takes about 20 minutes and is optional but encouraged for all graduate students.

Mentoring Networks

In addition to your Temporary Advisor or Major Professor, you are encouraged to develop a broad network of individuals who can provide academic and professional mentorship during and beyond your time as a graduate student.

Peer Mentoring

The purpose of the peer mentor program is to offer support to first-year Social Welfare PhD students. Peer mentors aid their mentees in adjusting and transitioning into the program, connect mentees to resources, and provide emotional and logistical support during their first year. Mentors are students who have completed at least two years in the program and volunteer to be mentors. The PhD Chair, along with the PhD Program Coordinator, matches mentees and mentors based on interest area, availability, and other factors.

- Social Welfare PhD Program Peer Mentoring Guidelines: https://uwmadison.app.box.com/folder/59798879984

Degree Requirements

Doctoral Degree Requirements

All students in the Social Welfare PhD Program are responsible for keeping aware of the following requirements to complete the degree.

For all current requirements to complete your degree (e.g., credits, courses, milestones, and learning outcomes/goals) see your program's page in the *Graduate Guide*: guide.wisc.edu/graduate/social-work/social-welfare-phd/#requirementstext

For prior year policies that may apply to you, see guide.wisc.edu/archive.

Committee

Doctoral committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, administer preliminary and final oral defense examinations, evaluate a dissertation, and/or sign a degree warrant. For general guidance from The Graduate School on the role and composition of committees as well as an online tool to determine if your committee meets minimum requirements, see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201.

Your advisor chairs your committee and provides individualized guidance on selecting committee members.

The student is responsible for meeting with each member of the committee, as deemed necessary by committee members, to review progress and assess the student's knowledge and readiness for the defense exam. A committee member may request that the student provide supporting documentation to make this determination. The Chair will be responsible for contacting each committee member for feedback on the student's readiness for taking the defense exam. If committee members believe the student is not ready, the Chair will convey this information to the student, along with a proposed plan to move forward.

Preliminary Exam

The preliminary exam allows students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge in each substantive area relevant to social work or social welfare. The exam is intended to demonstrate the student's ability to concisely communicate an integration and synthesis of empirical and theoretical knowledge, a critical analysis of prior research, and implications for future scholarly work. The preliminary exam is viewed as the passageway to the dissertation and it is intended to demonstrate the student's competence in bridging or linking their coursework (i.e., related to studies in their substantive area, theory, and methods), and their eventual dissertation research. See Preliminary Exam and Prelim Proposal Examples in the PhD Student Resource Center in Box.

Preliminary Exam Proposal

The preliminary exam proposal is developed by the student in consultation with the Chair (and other committee members as appropriate) to clearly articulate the format, content, and bibliography for the preliminary exam.

The proposal must;

- summarize the preliminary exam purpose, structure, and content,
- and should specify the organization of the paper, major topics, and issues to be covered, approximate page length, and reading list.

See examples: uwmadison.app.box.com/folder/52555609188. The student is free to consult and dialogue with any member of the faculty while they are developing their preliminary exam proposal.

Once the preliminary exam proposal is written and reviewed by the committee Chair, copies are submitted to the preliminary exam committee and a preliminary exam proposal meeting is scheduled. At this meeting, the committee will determine whether to approve the preliminary exam proposal and bibliography.

The committee may request that the student revise the proposal and bibliography and could require a second proposal meeting be scheduled after the revisions are completed. The student should make every effort to make revisions promptly (deadline to be agreed upon by the committee) and resubmit the draft to the committee members. Once approved, the preliminary exam proposal serves as an agreement for the structure of the preliminary exam.

Preliminary Exam Proposal Deadlines

An important consideration in developing and approving the preliminary exam proposal is the feasibility of completing the preliminary paper within the expected timeline, given the proposed format and subject matter.

All students are expected and required to complete the preliminary exam proposal, paper, and oral exam in a timely fashion. The Graduate Coordinator needs to be notified once each step is complete or passed.

Students following the Standard Program sequence should have their preliminary exam proposal submitted and approved by October 15th no later than the fall of their third year. If they do not have their proposal defended by this date, they must have written approval for an extension from their committee Chair. If they do not have their proposal defended by January 31st of the third year, they will need to obtain the written approval of the PhD Committee for an extension. If they do not defend their proposal by May 31st of their third year, they will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

Students in the Joint PhD/MSW Program, who come in with a BSW at enrollment, should have their preliminary exam proposal submitted and approved by May 15th in the spring of the third year, and those without the BSW should have their preliminary exam proposal submitted and approved by October 15th in the fall of their fourth year. If these deadlines are not met, written approval for extensions will be required from the committee Chair. If after 3.5 months the proposal is not accepted, written approval will be required from the PhD Committee. If the proposal is still not accepted after 7.5 months from the initial deadline, the student will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

Written Preliminary Exam

The preliminary exam consists of a written paper 30-50 pages in length (double spaced, excluding references) that consists of three sections: 1) a critical review of the literature in a general problem area, 2) a discussion of the relevant theoretical literature in the problem area, and 3) a critique of research methodologies and analytic strategies. Students should demonstrate the following as they address these three sections of their preliminary exam:

- A thorough and well-defined review, integrative synthesis, and critical analysis of literature that demonstrates an ability to identify issues requiring scholarly attention in their substantive area;
- A grasp of one or more essential theoretical frameworks that have been used to study their problem area with attention to the strengths and weaknesses; demonstrate how their conceptual or theoretical approach to research will contribute to the existing knowledge base in the field;
- A grasp of research designs and statistical methodologies that have been used in the past to study their problem area, including the strengths and weakness of each; demonstrate why they recommend specific research designs or other methods among the various alternatives.

Guidelines for the Written Preliminary Exam

In keeping with the purpose of the exam as a method for students to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge in a given substantive area, certain restrictions are naturally placed on the communication and feedback process with faculty during the writing process. However, there may be circumstances in which brief consultations with the Chair or other committee members

may be helpful to prevent students from becoming stuck. The following restrictions are placed on these consultations:

- Students may seek verbal or written consultations from committee members that are restricted to clarifying questions or procedural issues related to the prelim. For example, a student may talk with a faculty member about an aspect of the preliminary exam that they are uncertain about. The faculty member may share various considerations or ideas for thinking about the issue and the student will be left to determine how to resolve the matter.
- Alternatively, a student may find that their estimated page length for various sections of the preliminary exam was under- or over-estimated. They may consult with faculty to explore options/preferences for addressing this.

The first draft of the prelim should be submitted within three months of the proposal's approval to the Preliminary Exam Committee Chair, who will then disseminate the written exam to all committee members. The Chair should not provide feedback on the prelim prior to disseminating it to the committee. If the student requires an extension to the three month deadline for submitting the first draft, the student must seek written approval for an extension of up to three additional months from the committee Chair. If after six months the first draft of the prelim is not submitted, written approval for another extension of up to three additional months will be required from the PhD Committee. If the first draft is still not submitted nine months after the proposal was approved, the student will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

The paper will be read by each committee member, who will provide written feedback to the student and the Chair of the committee. Each member of the committee will also submit a grade of either "pass" or "revise and resubmit" to the Committee Chair. Students should receive written feedback from the committee within approximately three weeks of the completion of the paper. If the student chooses to complete the paper at a time when faculty members are not expected to be available on campus for a full 3 weeks following paper submission, the feedback should be given within five weeks. The Chair is responsible for circulating each committee member's feedback to others on the committee.

If the first submission receives a unanimous "pass", an oral exam is scheduled (see oral exam section below). Students may be given a "pass" but still be required to make minor revisions on the paper before holding the oral preliminary exam. If the first submission receives a "revise and resubmit", students will follow the procedure below for revising the paper.

Revising the Preliminary Exam

After the student receives the committee's feedback, the Chair and student have the option to meet to and develop a plan to revise the paper or may decide that the feedback is clear and manageable enough for the student to implement the revisions without such a meeting. If there is contradictory feedback from committee members or suggestions for changes that the student disagrees with or does not understand, the Chair is responsible for clarifying expectations for the revisions (this may require additional conversations or meetings among the committee members and student).

At the Chair's discretion, the student may be asked to write up a plan for revisions, obtain the approval of the Chair, and/or meet with and obtain the approval of other committee members. It will be at the discretion of the Chair whether the written plan takes the form of an outline or a more detailed write-up of the proposed changes, as well as whether the plan will be circulated to

each committee member. During the period in which the plan is being circulated, the student can work on revising the paper in accordance with the plan approved by the Chair. If additional feedback is received from committee members that would require a modification of the plan for revisions, the Chair will work with the student to incorporate these changes as well.

The student has up to one month to revise the paper from the date the Chair and/or the committee members provide their feedback or approve the plan for revisions (if applicable). The student will hand in the revised paper accompanied by a memo (like that which accompanies a revised manuscript for peer-review) specifying how they responded to (or did not respond to and why) each issue raised by the committee members. If the student requires an extension to the one month deadline for completing revisions, the student must seek written approval for an extension of up to one additional month from the committee Chair. If after two months the revised draft of the prelim is not submitted, written approval for another extension of one month will be required from the PhD Committee. If the revised draft is still not submitted three months after the student received the committee's feedback, the student will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

The Revised Preliminary Exam and Grading

The revised written preliminary exam is read by the committee, with each committee member evaluating the paper in writing and grading it as (1) pass or (2) fail. Again, students should receive written feedback from the committee within approximately three weeks of the completion of the paper but, if the student chooses to complete the paper at a time when faculty members are not expected to be available on campus, the feedback should be given within five weeks. Students may be given a "pass" but still be required to make minor revisions on the paper before or after holding the oral preliminary exam. Students who fail the preliminary exam will be dropped from the program.

The Oral Preliminary Exam

Once the student receives a "pass" on the written preliminary exam, an oral defense is scheduled. The oral defense should occur within eight weeks of the student completing the written phase of the preliminary exam process. Students must notify the PhD Program Coordinator at least three weeks prior to the oral defense to request the preliminary exam warrant (see below).

The broad objectives of the oral exam are: (a) to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their general knowledge about the body of literature covered in the preliminary exam; and (b) to provide a forum for students to articulate the implications of the literature they reviewed in their preliminary exam for their dissertation research.

Although the content and structure of the oral exam will vary from student to student and is at the discretion of the Chair and the committee, the oral exam will include (a) a discussion of the content of the paper and the rationale for revisions made (or not made), (b) questions related to the more general bibliography read by the student that are not necessarily addressed in the paper, and/or (c) questions concerning how the preliminary exam might inform the student's dissertation work.

The committee will evaluate the student's performance on the oral exam and assign one of the following marks: pass with distinction, pass, or non-pass. The "pass with distinction" should be reserved for students who merit this evaluation based on their overall performance (i.e., considering the student's performance in both the written and oral components of the prelims). Students typically will get the results of the oral exam on the day of the exam. However, if

committee members need to delay their assessment of the exam, the results must be communicated to the student within three weeks after completion of the oral. If a student does not pass the oral exam, they may retake the exam once.

Preliminary Exam Deadlines

Students are expected to complete the preliminary exam process within one year from the date of the preliminary exam proposal defense meeting. Students must submit the first draft of their preliminary exam within three months after the date that the preliminary exam proposal was approved. If it is not completed by this date, they will need the committee Chair's written consent for a three-month extension. If it is not completed after six months, they will need the PhD Committee's consent for a three-month extension. Students are expected to complete revisions to their preliminary exam within one month after receiving feedback from the committee. If revisions are not completed by this date, they will need the committee Chair's written consent for a one-month extension. If it is not completed after two months, they will need the PhD Committee's consent for an additional one-month extension. Students who do not complete the preliminary exam process in the expected timeframe, or do not seek and receive necessary approvals for additional time, will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

The Preliminary Exam Warrant

Three weeks prior to the date of the oral exam, students must submit the Prelim Warrant Request Form and completed Course Progress Form to the PhD Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will confirm the student has completed all coursework and removed all incomplete grades before formally requesting that a preliminary exam warrant be issued by the Graduate School.

Before issuing the warrant, the Graduate School will certify that the student has satisfied the doctoral minimum graduate credit requirement, maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher, and removed all incomplete and unreported grades. Once the oral exam is passed, the warrant with faculty signatures serves as a formal record certifying that the student has completed the exam and met all program requirements except the dissertation. Upon passing the oral exam, the student returns the completed (signed) form to the PhD Program Coordinator for submission to the Graduate School for approval.

Once the signed warrant has been approved, the student is now a dissertator, effective the next academic semester. See the Graduate School policy on dissertator status and deadlines.

Dissertation and Oral Defense

After successfully passing the preliminary exam, and the signed preliminary exam warrant has been approved by the Graduate School, the student is formally a doctoral degree candidate with dissertator status. A dissertator is a unique fee status for students who have completed all requirements for a PhD degree except for the dissertation. The Graduate Coordinator needs to be notified once each step is complete or passed.

Guidelines for Writing the Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal provides a blueprint for the dissertation and once approved, constitutes a contract between the student and the committee. Proposals vary by topic, methods, and committee preferences; however, they should be clearly written descriptions of a proposed original research study addressing a significant substantive area relevant to social welfare and the field of social work.

Dissertation proposals include standard elements of research proposals such as:

1. a succinct problem statement and significant aims of the study;
2. a concise review of the theories relevant to the study and the theoretical or conceptual framework;
3. a review of significant literature pertaining to the proposed study;
4. the primary research questions or hypotheses;
5. a description of the significance of the study; 6) a thorough description of the research methods including design, sampling, data collection, measures, methods of analysis, and statement of human subjects protection;
6. the potential implications for social work or social welfare practice or policy;
7. and references.
8. Other elements may be requested by the committee, such as the proposed timeline and schedule for completion, and the tentative dissertation outline.

Students will work with the dissertation committee Chair to develop the proposal and then disseminate it to the committee for review. The length and format of the proposal is negotiated with the Chair and committee members. A dissertation proposal meeting is scheduled three to four weeks after the proposal is disseminated to committee members.

The Chair and a minimum of two additional readers are required to approve the dissertation proposal; however, given the advantages of ensuring committee member review and support of the proposal, we encourage students to invite and involve all committee members as early as possible. A copy of the dissertation proposal must also be filed with the PhD Program Coordinator, and the committee Chair must certify that the proposal has been approved.

For dissertation resources, including examples, visit the PhD Student Resource Center in Box.

Dissertation Proposal Deadlines

Students are expected to complete the dissertation exam process within two years from the date of the preliminary exam proposal defense meeting. Students must successfully complete their dissertation proposal within a year of reaching dissertator status. If it is not completed by this date, they will need the committee Chair's written consent for a three-month extension. If it is not completed after fifteen months, they will need the PhD Committee's consent for an extension, and if it is not completed after eighteen months, they will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

Guidelines for Writing the Dissertation

Students are advised to review the Graduate School's Guide to Preparing Your Doctoral Dissertation. This guide helps students prepare for their dissertation and the oral defense. Before writing their dissertation, students are also advised to check with the Graduate School and the library to be sure that they are meeting the standards and requirements of the University regarding format requirements and deadlines.

Increasingly, dissertation committees are encouraging students to consider drafting two or more manuscripts in publication-ready format rather than the traditional dissertation format. This format usually includes a broader introduction or background chapter, as well as an integrative discussion chapter, in addition to the standalone manuscripts. Bibliographies and references throughout the dissertation should be formatted according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. A reference copy is available in the School of Social Work's library.

Final Dissertation Oral Exam and Warrant

At least three to four weeks before the final oral exam date, provide a completed dissertation draft to committee. Additionally, three weeks prior to the final oral exam date, a Warrant Request Form must be completed and submitted to the PhD Program Coordinator. The PhD Program Coordinator submits the request to the Graduate School and once approved, the student requests Committee signatures, and collects the final copy.

Students should ask their Committee Chair how to prepare for the final oral exam. Commonly, students are asked to prepare a brief presentation of their dissertation research followed by a question-and-answer discussion. Students may be asked to leave the room so that committee members can discuss the dissertation at any point during the final oral exam.

At the final oral exam, Committee Members may decide additional work or corrections are needed. If this can be within a month, all members, except the Major Professor, may sign the necessary documents at the final oral exam meeting. When the Major Professor, in consultation with the other members, agrees that the additional work has been completed in a satisfactory manner, they sign the Final Warrant without another oral exam. This procedure is meant only for thesis's minor changes. Other change types will lead to a new final oral exam.

After the request of the warrant, watch for an email from the Graduate School with the subject line, "Required steps and reading for completing your doctoral degree". Refer to this email and the Graduate School's Completing Your Doctoral Degree webpage for details that need to be completed prior to graduation. It is the student's responsibility to complete all required documents, including the submission of the Final Warrant to the Graduate School. Students cannot receive certification of degree completion from the Registrar's Office until all grades are posted.

Dissertation Exam Defense Deadlines

All students are expected and required to complete the dissertation exam proposal, paper(s), and oral exam in a timely fashion. The Graduate Coordinator needs to be notified once each step is completed or passed.

Students following the Standard Program sequence should have their Dissertation Oral Exam Defense scheduled, dissertation defended, and warrant completed (signed) by their fifth year. If they do not have their dissertation defended by this date, they must have written approval for an extension from their committee Chair. If they do not have their proposal defended by August 31st of the 5th year, they will need to obtain the written approval of the PhD Committee for an extension. If they do not defend their proposal by December 31st of their sixth year, they will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

Students in the Joint PhD/MSW Program, who come in with a BSW at enrollment, should have their Dissertation Oral Exam Defense scheduled, dissertation defended, and warrant completed (signed) by their sixth year. If they do not have their dissertation defended by this date, they must have written approval for an extension from their committee Chair. If they do not have their proposal defended by August 31st of the 5th year, they will need to obtain the written approval of the PhD Committee for an extension. If they do not defend their proposal by May 31st of their sixth year, they will no longer be in "good standing." Students who are no longer in good standing will not be eligible for departmental funding. All approved extensions must be documented in writing and given to the PhD Program Coordinator to place in the student's records.

Doctoral Degree Checklist: Timeline & Deadlines

The PhD program is a full-time program, **with no part-time option.** Students generally progress through the doctoral program in three stages: program coursework, writing and defending the preliminary exam, and conducting and defending a dissertation. Each stage dictates the minimum and maximum graduate-level credit load requirements. Courses taken pass/fail, for audit, or below 300 do not count toward these minimums or maximums.

Standard or PhD Only Program Sequence

Note: Joint Program students will take an extra year to move through the sequence.

Expected Milestone Dates	
Coursework Completed	Spring Semester of Year 2
Prelim Proposal Meeting	*By Oct 15th (Fall Semester of Year 3)
First Draft of Prelim	Within 3 months of prelim proposal approval
Prelim Defense	Spring or Summer Semester of Year 3
Dissertator Status	Summer Semester of Year 3 or Fall Semester of Year 4
Dissertation Proposal	Fall Semester of Year 4
Dissertation Defense	Spring or Summer Semester of Year 4 or 5

*Dates stipulated by program policy. Other dates represent typical timelines for SW doctoral students, and should be negotiated with the Major Professor.

The Graduate School maintains a list of steps to complete your master's degree, including deadlines and important things to know as you progress toward graduation: grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide.

Five-Year Rule

A candidate for the PhD degree who fails to defend their dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary exam may be required to take another preliminary exam and be admitted to candidacy a second time.

Enrollment Requirements

You are responsible for following Graduate School policies related to course enrollment requirements and limitations:

- **Adding / Dropping Courses**grad.wisc.edu/documents/add-drop
- **Auditing Courses** policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1224
- **Canceling Enrollment** grad.wisc.edu/documents/canceling-enrollment
- **Continuous Enrollment Requirement for Dissertators** policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1204
- **Enrollment Accountability** grad.wisc.edu/documents/enrollment-accountability
- **Minimum Enrollment Requirements** policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208

Academic Exception Petitions

Academic exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis and should not be considered a precedent. Deviations from normal progress are highly discouraged, but the program recognizes that there are in some cases, extenuating academic and personal circumstances.

Petitions for course exceptions/substitutions or exceptions to the Satisfactory Progress Expectations (academic or conduct) shall be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies or the relevant committee chair (example, Curriculum Chair). The following procedures apply to all petitions:

- The specific requirement/rule/expectation pertinent to the petition must be identified.
- The student's academic advisor must provide written support for the petition.
- All coursework substitutions and equivalencies will be decided by the appropriate area-group faculty or curriculum chair.

More generally, the Director of Graduate Studies, consulting with the student's advisor, may grant extensions to normal progress requirements for students who face circumstances (like tenure extensions) as noted in university regulations, this includes childbirth, adoption, significant responsibilities for elder or dependent care obligations, disability or chronic illness, or circumstances beyond one's control. Where warranted, the petition should provide good evidence of plans and ability to return to conformance with the standard and to acceptably complete the program. The normal extension will be one semester; anything beyond this will be granted *only in the event of highly extraordinary circumstances*. Extensions will be granted formally with a note of explanation to be placed in the student's file.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Your continuation as a graduate student at UW-Madison is at the discretion of your program, the Graduate School, and your faculty advisor. Any student may be placed on probation or dismissed from the Graduate School for not maintaining satisfactory academic progress, and this can impact your academic standing (detailed below), financial aid (see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1040), or funding (consult your sources of funding, as applicable). Our program has its own definition of satisfactory academic progress and related procedures that supplement Graduate School policy, as described in this section.

Definition

Information about how the Graduate School determines satisfactory academic progress can be found at this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218. In addition to the Graduate School's monitoring of satisfactory academic progress, this program regularly reviews the satisfactory academic progress of its students, defined as the following:

Students must pass all courses with a grade of B or better. A student must retake any required course in which a lower grade than B is received, except for the first-year statistics sequence where a grade of BC or C may be offset by a grade of A or AB in another statistics course taken subsequently.

Students are also responsible for keeping to any satisfactory progress policies that their funding sources may outline for them.

Yearly Review of Student Progress

Each spring, the PhD faculty, in consultation with the PhD Program Chair and the Major Professor (or temporary advisor for first year students), conduct a yearly review of the progress of all PhD students, including those in the Joint MSW/PhD Program. The yearly review is intended to monitor student progress in the program to assure that students are completing the required and elective courses satisfactorily and are moving toward completion of the degree in a timely manner. Students in the joint program are expected to move at a slower pace in the program than students who entered the program with an MSW. Students will receive feedback from the Chair of the Program in the form of a letter during the summer.

Conduct Expectations

Personal Conduct

Students are responsible for social work professional demeanor and performance in the classroom, in the field, and in their interactions with agency supervisors, faculty, staff and student colleagues.

Professional Conduct

The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards maintains detailed guidance on student rights and responsibilities related to learning in a community that is safe and fosters integrity and accountability. You are responsible for keeping aware of their policies and procedures, found at the following page: conduct.students.wisc.edu

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapter 14. For further information on this law, what constitutes academic misconduct, and procedures related to academic misconduct, see:

- The Graduate School
  - Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Academic grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-academic
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards
  - Academic Misconduct Website conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct
  - Academic Misconduct Flowchart conduct.students.wisc.edu/documents/academic-misconduct-flow-chart

Non-Academic Misconduct

Non-academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapters 17 and 18. For further information on these laws, what constitutes non-academic misconduct, and procedures related to non-academic misconduct, see:

- The Graduate School
  - Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Non-Academic grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-nonacademic
- Office for Student Conduct and Community Standards
  - Non-Academic Misconduct Website conduct.students.wisc.edu/nonacademic-misconduct
- University of Wisconsin System (UWS)
  - Chapter 17: Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/17
  - Chapter 18: Conduct on University Lands docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/18

Research Misconduct

Trust in the accuracy and veracity of the scholarly record are fundamental to science. When that record is tainted, whole fields of study can be set back or questioned. Moreover, when scientists have been found to engage in misconduct, partners and the public lose faith in the ability of all scientists to address society's grand challenges.

Per the UW-Madison policy, "*research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.*" The policy applies to all those involved in the research process including graduate students.

For more information, please visit the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research research misconduct page.

If you have questions or concerns about research misconduct or integrity, this can be discussed confidentially with the Research Integrity Officer (rio@research.wisc.edu).

Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Bullying)

Hostile and intimidating behavior (HIB), sometimes referred to as "bullying," is prohibited by university policy applicable to faculty, academic staff, and university staff. For further definition, policy, and procedures related to HIB see: hr.wisc.edu/hib. Students who feel they have been subject to HIB are encouraged to review the informal and formal options on the "Addressing HIB" tab of this website.

Grievance Process

Each college or program on campus has a grievance process that students can use to address other concerns regarding their experience in the program. This program's grievance process can be found detailed at: https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/social-work/social-welfare-phd/#policiestext

Process and Sanctions for Violations of Conduct Standards

The Office of Student Assistance and Support may have grounds to issue one or more of the following:

- Reprimand
- Probation
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Restitution
- A zero or failing grade on an assignment/exam
- A lower grade or failure in the course
- Removal from course
- Enrollment restrictions in a course/program
- Conditions/terms of continuing as a student

Incident Reporting (Hate, Bias, Sexual Assault, Hazing, Students of Concern, Bullying)

The Office of Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) maintains a portal to report incidents of hate, bias, sexual assault, hazing, dating/domestic violence, stalking, missing students, and students displaying other concerning behaviors at UW-Madison:

- Office of Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) Incident Reporting https://osas.wisc.edu/report-an-issue/

As noted above in "Personal Conduct Expectations," students who feel they have been subject to hostile and/or intimidating behavior (i.e., bullying) are encouraged to review the informal and formal options for addressing this behavior (including filing complaints when desired) at:

- Human Resources Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Website hr.wisc.edu/hib

Funding, Employment, and Finances

Program Funding

"Funding" is a term used to describe university employment or support to cover some or all of your costs of graduate education. It varies in kind, amount, and level of guarantee.

Social Welfare PhD students are generally guaranteed a minimum funding package consisting of a 33.4%, 9-month appointment for a minimum of five years, if they are in good academic standing, make satisfactory progress in their coursework, perform acceptably in their appointed position, and remain in residence. While many appointments or combinations of appointments can go above 33.4%, and may include summer appointments, the guarantee of funding is only for 33.4% for 9-months for five years. Typically, students do not receive funding after their 5th year in the program, though some exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on funding availability and the fit between a student's skills and faculty/departmental needs with regards to TA, PA, RA, and teaching appointments.

The Graduate School maintains policies related to graduate student funding/employment:

- Maximum Levels of Appointments grad.wisc.edu/documents/maximum-levels-of-appointments
- Concurrent Appointments for Fellows/Trainees grad.wisc.edu/documents/concurrent-appointments
- Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208
- Eligibility for Summer RA, TA, PA, and LSA Appointments policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5089

Finding Funding Without a Guaranteed Appointment

Campus-Wide and External Sources

To help you find resources to pay for costs related to graduate education, the Graduate School provides a comprehensive overview of the funding process on campus as well as descriptions of the types of funding available, sources of funding, minimum stipend rates and benefits, and links to applicable human resources policies (e.g. GAPP) at:

- Graduate School: Funding and Financial Aid grad.wisc.edu/funding
- External Fellowship Database grad.wisc.edu/funding/external-fellowship-database
- UW-Madison Libraries Grants Information Collection library.wisc.edu/memorial/collections/grants-information-collection

In Our Program

In addition to campus-wide and external sources of funding, the Social Welfare PhD program / the School of Work offer sources of funding that are awarded on a competitive or need-basis.

School of Social Work PhD Awards**:**

- Alfred Kadushin Dissertation Research Award
- Arthur P. Miles School of Social Work Scholarship
- DEI Leadership Award
- Exceptional Service Award
- Irving Piliavin Award
- Doctoral Research Paper Award
- Dorothy M. Pearson Graduate Fellowship
- Sheldon D. Rose Memorial Scholarship
- Teaching Excellence Award

PhD Award nominations are announced in early spring and awarded at the yearly PhD Luncheon.

PhD funding requests

Emergency funding information

Additional Policies & Resources

- Graduate School Policy: Residence for Tuition Purposes grad.wisc.edu/documents/residence-for-tuition-purposes
- Employee Disability Resources employeedisabilities.wisc.edu
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (GAPP) hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp

Professional Development

When you participate in professional development, you build skills needed to succeed academically and thrive in your career. The following are professional development activities that we recommend for your consideration. Required professional development will be detailed in "Degree Requirements" above.

On Campus

The Graduate School develops and curates a wide variety of resources for professional development, including a tool to assess your skills, set goals, and create a plan with recommended activities on campus (e.g., the popular "Individual Development Plan" or IDP) as well as programming to help you explore careers, prepare for a job search, build your network and learn from alumni, manage projects, communicate about your research, and much more.

DiscoverPD helps master's and doctoral students at UW-Madison advance their academic and professional goals with customized recommendations based on a skills self-assessment. The 400+ professional development recommendations available in the DiscoverPD database are available in a range of formats to best meet your diverse needs, including in-person, virtual, asynchronous, and synchronous opportunities. All of this can be found at:

- Professional Development from the Graduate School grad.wisc.edu/professional-development

The Graduate School communicates professional development opportunities through an e-newsletter, *GradConnections*, that all graduate students receive at their wisc.edu email. Graduate students in traditional graduate degree programs receive the newsletter weekly during the academic year and every other week in the summer. Graduate students in online degree programs receive the newsletter every other week during the academic year and monthly during the summer.

In Our Program

For funding consideration, current PhD students seeking PhD Program funding for conference travel, dissertation research expenses, or other Program-related resources should begin by submitting a Funding Request form to the PhD Coordinator. If approved funding is received as a reimbursement, students must comply with the UW-Madison Expense Reimbursement Policy #320. For questions, refer to the Expense Reimbursement Policy.

Due to a limited budget, students are asked to explore other funding options as a first step. If traveling to present research conducted for a PA or RA position, students should inquire with their faculty supervisor regarding project funds for travel. In addition, students should inquire with the Graduate School and entities on campus with which students may be affiliated (e.g., the Institute for Research on Poverty). For more information about this funding, including current policies and details on eligibility, visit the Student Research Grants Competition webpage.