

Pre-Social Work Preparation at UH Mānoa

Text compiled from the UHM's Schools of Social Work website, National Association of Social Workers website, International Federation of Social Workers website, and the *UHM 2011-2012 Catalog*.

Social work promotes individual and collective well being through advocating for justice, providing effective programs and services, and enhancing individual and family development. Founded on principles of human rights and social justice, social work's primary responsibility is to the most vulnerable groups and individuals of our society. Social workers view differences among people as enriching the quality of life for all.

Social workers help people prevent and overcome social and health problems such as poverty, mental illness, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse and neglect, emotional instability, illness, economic uncertainty, domestic violence, homelessness, and drug abuse. Social workers enhance opportunities for individuals, especially for those who have been historically oppressed, and seek to maximize individuals' and groups' participation in society using theories of human behavior, relationships, and social systems.

Social workers work directly with individuals, couples, families, and groups to make the most effective use of their abilities and to identify and overcome obstacles preventing them from participating fully in society. Social workers may also work with communities, organizations, and social systems to improve services and to administrate social and health programs. When adequate services do not exist in a community, social workers sometimes develop new services.

Social workers practice in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals and clinics, schools, public welfare departments, family and child welfare agencies, mental health clinics, gerontology and geriatric programs, legal administration, immigrant and refugee centers, private practice, and so on. They also practice in a wide variety of formats, from assisting individuals to advocating for specific populations, from home visits to office appointments, from working with people to filing reports. Some social workers also teach or conduct research in academia.

Related Professions: health educators, counselors, psychologists, and human services assistants

Social Work Degree Programs

Social work is one of the few healthcare fields that provide job opportunities at all three levels, Bachelor, Master, and Doctor. Higher degrees provide access to more job opportunities; for more specific information, contact UHM's Career Development and Student Employment office or UHM's School of Social Work.

Becoming a social worker requires approximately 4 to 10 years of education:

BSW, or Bachelor of Social Work (~4 years)

MSW, or Master in Social Work (~2 years)

Ph.D., or Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare (3+ years)

The BSW provides students with the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession integrated with a liberal arts education. The BSW prepares students for beginning-level generalist practice and advanced study.

The MSW provides students with the knowledge and competence necessary for working with diverse populations. The MSW prepares students for advanced practice with individuals and families within the context of their communities.

The Ph.D. prepares social workers for leadership roles in social work and social welfare. A Ph.D. also allows social workers to conduct research and teach in academia. The program requires advanced scholarship and encourages inquiry into Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian cultures in our community, state, and the Pacific region.

Prerequisites for Admission

Remember that *requirements vary from school to school!* The following guidelines pertain only to the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work at UH Mānoa.

Bachelor Level: UHM's School of Social Work builds its curriculum upon a foundation of liberal arts education and typically admits students at the Junior level. To be admitted to the BSW program, applicants must:

- be admitted to UH Mānoa;
- have completed, or be in the process of completing UH's General Education Core requirements (special consideration is given to second-semester sophomores requesting early admission);
- have a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher;
- be able to provide evidence of motivation for, and commitment to social work (e.g., personal, volunteer, or social work-related experience); and
- have completed, or be in the process of completing, the following courses with a grade of 'C' or better:

Biological science emphasizing human development	1 course—an approved list can be found at http://www.hawaii.edu/sswork/forms/bsw/Bio_Sci_Courses.pdf
PHIL 110 or 111	Introduction to Deductive or Inductive Logic
Political Science	1 course
Psychology	1 course
SW 200	The Field of Social Work

Visit www.hawaii.edu/sswork/forms/bsw/bsw_00_overview.pdf to see the School of Social Work's current list of prerequisites. Note that the School offers recommendations for GenEd core courses. Visit <http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/ovcaa/programsheets/#ssw> for a program sheet and sample academic year plan for the BSW degree.

Master Level: Admission to the MSW program requires no specific prerequisites, but does require the following:

- a completed Bachelor degree from an accredited college or university, or the equivalent from a foreign institution;
- a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average;
- a liberal arts foundation;
- a record of scholarship that indicates the ability to do satisfactory graduate work;
- evidence of personal qualifications, motivation, and social work or related experience; and
- the potential for successful graduate education and professional practice in social work.

The School of Social Work admits students to the MSW program only for Fall semesters; the application deadline is February 1st.

Doctor Level: Admission to the Ph.D. program is competitive and based on evidence of potential for leadership and scholarly inquiry, and is decided on a case-by-case basis. For more information, contact the chair of the PhD program at UHM's School of Social Work (see contact information below).

What makes a strong candidate?

UHM's School of Social Work is looking for students who:

- have met the prerequisites (see above);
- demonstrate compassion, empathy, and a commitment to social justice;
- have high ethical and moral standards;
- are able to work in a variety of settings;
- are able to handle stressful environments;
- are able to incorporate a variety of liberal arts disciplines into their work;
- live a well-rounded lifestyle and are able to balance professional and humanitarian interests;
- have excellent logic and reasoning skills;
- have strong oral and written communication skills.

Researching Schools

There are now over 400 accredited undergraduate and graduate social work programs, each one unique in its mission, philosophy, criteria, and strengths. For a BSW, it is a good idea to attend your local public university. This will allow you to develop a foundation of knowledge and skills in social work without accumulating excessive debt.

For graduate degrees, although there are resources that rank schools (The Gourman Report, U.S. News & World Report, The Princeton Review, etc.), the rankings are rarely pertinent for individual applicants. More important is whether there is a good match between applicant and school.

To find schools that are good a fit for you (PAC peer advisors can help with this process):

1. Assess your individual strengths and weaknesses, your professional interests, learning style, and personality;
2. Start with a list of all schools you would consider attending, which usually includes all 400+ schools;
3. Create your “Long List” by omitting schools that do not match your professional interests, learning style, and personality (PAC offers a list of 7 factors to consider, found here: <http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/pac/Choosing%20a%20School%20Handout.pdf>);
4. Once you have your GRE scores, use your GPA and GRE scores to create your “Short List” by categorizing the schools into “Reach,” “Match,” and “Safety.” Then, rank the schools in each category by preference and choose how many schools you can afford to apply to. Be sure to apply to schools in all three categories.
5. If possible, visit schools to see their facilities, talk to Admissions Directors, and talk to students.

Entrance Exam

Some schools may require applicants to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) before applying to a graduate program.

GRE Overview: The revised GRE was introduced in August of 2011 and includes new types of questions featuring real life scenarios. The format allows you to edit, change your answers, and skip around within a section.

The GRE can be scheduled for almost any day of the year and is available only in computer-based format. The test requires approximately 4 hours to complete and assesses your skills in Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Analytical Writing.

Appointments are scheduled first-come, first served basis. You can register three ways: 1) via telephone, at 1-800-473-2255 or 1-443-751-4820 or by calling the test center directly; 2) via online at www.gre.org; or 3) via mail, by sending a completed *Authorization Voucher Request Form* (found in the *GRE Registration Bulletin*) and registration fee payment to ETS-CBT/GRE Box 371859 Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7859.

Payment:

Registration fee: \$160

Payment for Computer-based Tests

- Credit/Debit Card (American Express®, Discover®, JCB®, MasterCard® or VISA®).
- Money Order/Certified Check/Voucher

- Personal check, payable to ETS-GRE. If paying by check, please comply with the following:
 - Bank name and address must be preprinted on the face of the check.
 - Check must have a preprinted check number.
 - Candidate/ payee name and address must be preprinted on the check
 - Check date CANNOT be over 90 days old.
 - New bank account starter checks missing the preprinted name and address are not acceptable.

GRE Scoring: Scores for the Verbal and Quantitative sections range from 130 to 170 in one-point increments, with 170 being highest and 150 being the average. Scores for the Writing section range from 0 to 6 in half-point increments, with 6 being highest and 3 being the average. Your score report will be mailed to you, and will include not only your scores but also your percentile ranking. Starting November 29, 2011, you will receive your scores within 10-15 days.

Preparation: Your most important preparation for the GRE is your undergraduate courses, many of which sharpen your writing and verbal reasoning skills.

Official Test Preparation Material:

- *The Official Guide to the GRE revised General Test* from ETS
- Practice Questions on GRE website
- Free diagnostic exam on GRE website

The Application Process

For all social work programs, you will need to apply directly to the individual school or program. Before applying, you should first meet with an academic advisor to assess your resume. To apply to UHM's School of Social Work, visit www.hawaii.edu/sswork/bsw-forms.html for instructions and downloadable forms. Note that the website includes information on applying for financial aid and on available scholarships.

As part of your application, you will need to submit:

- the application form;
- a statistical information form;
- a personal statement;
- official transcripts from all institutions of higher education that you have attended; and
- three letters of recommendation.

Note: Application deadlines are February 1 for the Fall semester (BSW, MSW, and PhD), and October 1 for the Spring semester (BSW only).

Additional Information

UH Mānoa's Pre-Health/Pre-Law Advising Center (PAC) has reference books, lists of volunteer opportunities, academic planning worksheets, and one-on-one advising by peers who can help you prepare for applying to social work programs.

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Website: www.hawaii.edu/sswork

Application to UHM's School of Social Work	http://www.hawaii.edu/sswork/forms/bsw/bsw_01_appl.pdf
UHM's BSW Organization	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Myron-B-Thompson-School-of-Social-Work-BSWO/217326567386
Council on Social Work Education	www.cswe.org/
Graduate Record Exam (GRE)	www.gre.org
National Association of Social Workers	www.socialworkers.org
International Federation of Social Workers	www.ifsw.org/home