The National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) embraces as its special responsibility the education of ethical social workers who promote the dignity of all people, as bio-psycho-social-spiritual beings, and serve the Catholic community, their neighboring communities, and beyond in keeping with the social teachings and values of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredits the Master of Social Work program’s curriculum and instruction. CSWE is the national organization responsible for the accreditation of baccalaureate and master’s level social work programs. Accreditation is critical for social work education programs to ensure that the mission, goals, and objectives of the program are being met and evaluated. Programs demonstrate adherence to CSWE’s Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards to earn accreditation and reaccreditation. CSWE’s standards influence program goals and objectives, curriculum content areas, and program and student assessment plans. The re-accreditation process has six steps: 1) eligibility determination, 2) the self-study, 3) the initial Commission on Accreditation (COA) Review, 4) the site visit and report, 5) the program’s response to the site visit report and Commissioner’s review, and 6) the final COA decision.

I. Program Description

The M.S.W. Program at NCSSSS prepares advanced social work practitioners who, consistent with their chosen concentrations, act as agents of change to promote individual and societal well-being within a complex and constantly changing national and global context. The academic and field components of the master’s program encompass a foundation and advanced curriculum that are grounded in the liberal arts and a generalist perspective and shaped by the values and ethics of the social work profession and Catholic Social Teachings. The curriculum insures the achievement of identified goals and outcomes through sequential and integrated classroom and field education experiences.

To earn the M.S.W., students must successfully complete a 60-credit hour program, consisting of 30 credit hours of foundation curriculum and 30 credit hours of advanced curriculum; complete two field placements (more than 1,000 hours of field experience); pass two written comprehensive examinations (one for each 30-credit segment of the curriculum), and either submit two research papers to meet the “Option of Degree Without Thesis” writing requirement or write a master’s thesis. At the foundation level, a coherent curriculum presents the eight required content areas, which are designated in the CSWE Educational Policy Statement, (Diversity, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Welfare Policy and Services, Social Work Practice, Research, and Field Education). The core curriculum in the foundation year presents content on Diversity (SSS 570), Human Behavior and the Social Environment (SSS 571 and SSS 572), Social Welfare Policy and Services (SSS 581 and SSS 582), Social Work Practice (SSS 605 and SSS 606), Research (SSS 590), and Field Education (SSS 673 and SSS
674) as discrete courses. Content on Values and Ethics is infused at the foundation level in all core courses and presented as a discrete course in the advanced curriculum (SSS 740). Content on Populations-at-risk and Social and Economic Justice is infused throughout the foundation and advanced curriculums. After passing their foundation comprehensive examinations, students pursue one from among three concentrations: Clinical, Social Justice and Social Change, or Combined (a combination of the two curricula). A “Health Care” specialization is available to students in the Clinical concentration, and students in the Social Justice and Social Change concentration can choose one of three specializations: “Policy and Community Change,” “Social Administration,” or “International Social Development.” The NCSSS Faculty has conceptualized the master’s-level concentrations as centering on a theoretically sound and value-grounded, advanced core comprised of five broad content areas anchored in the liberal arts and the professional foundation: Ethics, Theory, Practice, Evaluation and Concentration Practicum.

Field internship learning experiences are essential to achieving the goals and objectives of the M.S.W. curriculum. Each student has the opportunity for a practicum/internship in two different agency or program settings. Following the generalist model of practice, in the foundation phase students gain practice experience and use a range of intervention modalities with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. Their learning experiences in the practicum support what they are learning in the classroom regarding generalist practice. Direct engagement in service activities enables students to experience the discipline of professional relationships; apply human behavior, research and social policy curriculum content to the theory and practice of social work; develop the self-awareness required for a professional level of performance; and learn to integrate social work knowledge, values, skills and ethics in the context of a professional social work practice setting. In the concentration/specialization phase, students practice in agency settings with assignments and activities focused in their chosen area of concentration. Clinical students gain practice skills at an advanced level, learning to apply explanatory theories to the assessment of client systems differentially, distinguish appropriate treatment modalities for particular client problems, and apply practice models to treatment planning and intervention differentially. Social Justice and Social Change students learn to apply macro theories differentially to their practice, and they gain expertise and skills in social management/administration, social planning and/or policy analysis as macro methods of practice. Combined concentrators have both micro and macro practice learning opportunities, acquiring depth in the methodology of both clinical and macro social work practice. With some exceptions (e.g. advanced standing students), students complete a total of four semesters of Field Education. They are in a field placement 16 hours per week in the foundation phase (total of 480 hours) and 20 hours per week (total of 600 hours) in the concentration/specialization phase (up to 24 hours per week for combined concentrators).

The following specific criteria are utilized in the review of applications:

1. The Personal Statement is reviewed to determine (a) the applicant's ability to think and write conceptually; (b) the applicant's sensitivity and openness to others; (c) the applicant's understanding of and commitment to the profession of social work; (d) the student's ability to write well, stylistically and grammatically; and (e) respect for the values and ethics of the profession.
2. The Resume is reviewed to determine the extent of human service experience, and familiarity with social work as a profession.

3. The three Letters of Recommendation are used to learn how other professionals, educators, employers, or supervisors have assessed the potential of the applicant.

4. Undergraduate Transcripts are reviewed differentially according to the years of study and type of institution. All transcripts are reviewed for:
   • a liberal arts perspective (i.e. courses in Humanities, History, Philosophy, Science, and Culture), including both social and behavioral sciences:
   • Human Biology/Physiology; students without this background are requested to complete selected readings or to take a course prior to enrollment;
   • Basic course in Statistics; students without this course are asked to take one course prior to taking SSS 590

   Transcripts from recent graduates from U.S. colleges are examined with the expectation of the 3.0 GPA. For transcripts from applicants who graduated over 10 years ago, consideration is given to what the applicant has done since then (e.g. graduate studies; continuing education; related work experience, and so forth.). Transcripts from international universities are submitted by the applicant to accredited educational service programs for verification and transcript equivalence evaluations. These credentials are reviewed and submitted in the application.

5. Test Scores (GRE or MAT) are looked at as another possible indicator of academic success at the graduate level.

II. Goals for Student Learning

Following the completion of the MSW Program, graduates will:

1. Promote the well-being of all levels of client systems within each social environment.

2. Integrate the values of The Catholic University of America with those of the profession of social work, especially in valuing the dignity of all people as bio-psycho-social-spiritual beings.

3. Apply the theory and the skills of empowerment practice for working with the strengths of all levels of client systems, including individuals, couples, families, and groups within organizations and communities.

4. Recognize the value conflicts inherent in a society that continues to oppress vulnerable populations and is reluctant to achieve a positive change.

5. Identify with the history of the profession and its early commitment to social justice, as well as theory and practice in the promotion of social and economic justice.
6. Understand and integrate content to be informed consumers of social work research as well as competent practitioners of practice and program evaluation.

7. Build upon a breadth of foundation theory with depth in advanced theory to inform advanced practice.

8. Demonstrate competency in classroom and field opportunities that promote knowledge and skill for service to the Catholic and general communities on the local, national, and global level.

III. Student Assessment Outcome Measures

1. Admission: The personal statement is reviewed extensively to determine if the applicant can express in writing his or her interest in the profession of social work. The letters of recommendation are reviewed to determine if the applicant is ready for graduate education and has engaged in some volunteer or work experience related to social work. The resume is also reviewed to determine the level of volunteer or work experience related to the field.

2. Advanced standing/qualifying examinations: A student who has earned a BSW or equivalent degree within five years of application to NCSSS from a CSWE-accredited college or university and who meets all NCSSS Admissions and Advanced Standing requirements may be accepted for advanced standing. Advanced standing students shall have 30 hours of credit for foundation curriculum waived. However, no credit will be waived for any course in which the student received a grade below B-. A minimum of 30 credits must be completed in the MSW program at NCSSS in order to earn a graduate degree from CUA.

3. Course work/GPA: The program employs a comprehensive, mixed-method assessment plan for assessing student attainment of foundation and concentration/specialization objectives. Inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative assessment approaches provides a balance of specificity and depth. In addition to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of student progress that is part of normal course instruction, this assessment plan specifies the measurement procedures and methods used to evaluate the outcomes for each M.S.W. program objective. Students must maintain a 2.7 GPA to continue in the program.

4. Field Student Self-Assessment: The Field Student Self-Assessment form asks students enrolled in foundation and advanced field placements to evaluate themselves on each of the 12. Foundation Curriculum Objectives. Students use a 5-point response format (1 = unsatisfactory; 2 = less than adequate; 3 = adequate; 4 = more than adequate; and 5 = excellent). This self-evaluation is completed at the end of the academic year.

5. Foundation Student Field Evaluation: Field Educators evaluate all M.S.W. students at the end of the fall and spring semesters, during which students complete 480 internship hours. All Field Educators utilize the same assessment form, which is a comprehensive, 40-item Student Field Evaluation. It is organized around five areas of competence: Student Use of Self, Social Work Processes, Understanding of the Agency, Supervisory Process, and Professional Behavior, with an additional section that is individualized for each student (Professional Skills). Field Educators provide both
quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback, including ratings on 16 “threshold items” where at least satisfactory performance is required for successful completion of the field placement. Different areas of the Student Field Evaluation allow assessment of various aspects of 9 of the 12 Foundation Program Objectives. The threshold items are those set of skills which we have determined are essential to competent and professional social work practice. Students are rated on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 (Unsatisfactory = performance is well below expectations) to 10 (Outstanding = performance far exceeds expectations). The field instructor is asked to indicate how the student performing at the time of evaluation compared to “the expected level for a student at that point in that semester.” When a student’s scores are below satisfactory, the Director of Field Education, field liaison and field instructor determine whether a Student Review should be called, or whether last drastic measures need to be taken to try to ensure success in the subsequent semester.

6. Foundation comprehensive examination: The M.S.W. “Foundation Comprehensive Examination” is a four-hour, in-class examination that students take in March of the year in which they are enrolled in the Foundation Field Education and Integrative Seminar (SSS 674). It is comprised of five sections: Micro Practice, Mezzo Practice, Research, Macro Practice, and Policy. These different sections provide for assessment of 8 of the 12 Foundation Program Objectives. Students must earn at least 80 out of a possible 100 points to pass the exam. The exam is essay format and is completed online. The content measures foundation year curriculum and is evaluated by members of the full-time Faculty. If a student does not meet the expected requirement, an opportunity is provided to sit for an oral examination. If a student does not pass the oral exam, she or he is not permitted to advance to the second year.

7. Foundation Exit Survey: NCSSS began using this survey in academic year 2005-2006 to collect student feedback regarding Foundation Curriculum Objectives. The faculty decided that a survey administered closer to the completion of the first phase of course work would yield more useful information than retrospective results from the Graduating Exit Survey (GES), since the latter gathers data one to two years following completion of foundation courses. A web-based survey, the FES investigates four areas: (a) ratings on how well the program addressed the Foundation Curriculum Objectives; (b) experiences with five aspects of the School; (c) program strengths and areas for improvement; and (d) demographic items. The M.S.W. Program Director distributes the survey to all upcoming advanced-level students after completion of their foundation courses. This survey is completed after the Foundation comprehensive Examination. Items related to Foundation Curriculum Objectives use a 5-point response format: (1 = very poorly; 2 = poorly; 3 = adequately; 4 = well; 5 = very well). The stimulus question for quantitative data was “How well has your experience at NCSSS addressed…?” followed by a listing of the Foundation Curriculum Objectives.

8. In the Advanced Year, students are evaluated by their Field Educators mid-semester and at the end of the fall semester, and again at the end of the spring semester. In the event there have been any field-related problems, a mid-semester evaluation is required in the spring semester; otherwise, it is optional. In the Advanced Year, different evaluations have been developed for each of our 3 concentrations

9. Concentration comprehensive examination: Each student must also successfully pass an advanced comprehensive examination in her/his chosen concentration (clinical, social justice and social change or combined), while enrolled in the advanced field/seminar (SSS 872, 874, 876). The advanced concentration exam measures the curriculum content of the advanced
year. It includes content specific to theory, advanced practice, research, and ethics. It is an essay exam completed online as a take home exam. It is evaluated by members of the full-time faculty. If a student does not pass this exam, she or he has the opportunity to sit for an oral exam. If a student does not pass the oral exam, she or he is not eligible for graduation.

10. **M.S.W. thesis option:** The thesis proposal is developed in the first research class, SSS 590, and is approved by the instructor. The student is responsible for identifying a faculty member that will serve as a thesis advisor for this process. The student is required to ask the instructor of SSS 590 to provide the Chair of the MSW Committee with a written recommendation of the student’s suitability to complete a thesis.

11. **Graduation Exit Survey (GES):** This survey includes questions that directly assess accomplishment of Foundation Curriculum Objectives. It differs from the Foundation Exit Survey in that it is administered after the completion of the advanced year to provide ongoing assessment. It consists of five sections: (a) information regarding the student’s length of time in the program, chosen concentration, and method of financing her/his education; (b) ratings of how well the program addressed both Foundation and Concentration Objectives; (c) ratings of the student’s experiences with various offices and support programs at NCSSSS; 4) program strengths and areas for improvements; and 5) demographic items. The M.S.W. Program Director distributes the invitation to take this survey via email with information on its purpose and voluntary and confidential nature, and directions for connecting with a link. Items related to Foundation Curriculum Objectives used the same 5-point response format (1 = very poorly to 5 = very well).

12. **Student course/faculty evaluations:** Students complete an online survey evaluation for all courses. The evaluation includes questions specific to course content and to faculty performance. The evaluation tool contains quantitative and qualitative questions. All students are expected to contribute to the course evaluation process.

13. **Alumni Survey (AS):** This survey addresses the following areas: (a) reflections back on experiences as a graduate student; (b) experiences with employment and other professional activities; (c) job search experiences; (d) sense of preparation for entering the social work field; (e) experiences with licensure; and (f) demographic items. Findings from this survey are presented to the M.S.W. Program Committee and the full Faculty. Each potential respondent receives a personalized email with information about the purpose of the survey, how alumni are selected to participate, the voluntary and confidential nature of the survey, and directions for accessing the link for the survey. The Alumni Survey is conducted every five years. The results of this survey serve to provide direction and are used for continuous program modifications.

14. **Licensed Graduate Social Work (LGSW) Pass Rates:** M.S.W. graduates are eligible to sit for the four-hour, standardized LGSW examination once they have completed all program requirements. The exam includes 170 questions: 150 items count toward the score and 20 items are used for pre-testing purposes. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) does not set a passing score; they vary by jurisdiction. In the District of Columbia, the pass score is 75 or above. While NCSSSS recognizes that these exams do not constitute comprehensive testing of all social work content areas, findings do provide important data on mastery of specific knowledge and skills needed for competent and ethical practice. NCSSSS requests data concerning the LGSW exam from the ASWB for the purpose of monitoring NCSSSS graduate performance.
IV. Use of Results to Improve Student Learning

1. Members of the MSW Program Committee assess major’s achievement of outcomes on an ongoing basis as part of their regularly scheduled meetings. The Committee is comprised of selected faculty teaching in the MSW program. This process allows for ongoing assessment and monitoring of student performance.

2. NCSSS faculty has sent a series of benchmarks for the ongoing assessment of MSW students. Assessment mechanisms for the MSW Program’s foundation curriculum include 6 quantitative measures (Field Student Self-Assessment Form, Field Educator Assessment Form, Student Field Educator Form, Foundation Comprehensive Exam, Foundation Exit Survey, and Graduating Survey. All of these measures constitute either direct or indirect assessment of student performance in relation to the MSW Program foundation year objectives. All of these measures allow for ongoing assessment of outcomes related to student performance.

3. Assessment mechanisms for the MSW Program’s advanced concentration curriculum include 7 quantitative measures (Field Student Self-Assessment Form, Field Educator Assessment Form, Student Field Educator Form, Advanced Comprehensive Exam, Graduating Survey, Alumni Survey, and Licensing Exam. All of these measures constitute either direct or indirect assessment of student performance in relation to the MSW Program advanced year objectives. All of these measures allow for ongoing assessment of outcomes related to student performance.

The MSW Program Committee uses data from all of these assessment mechanisms for continuous program improvement and as part of program renewal. Data from outcome measures are utilized to revise curriculum, inform the sequencing of curriculum, and to plan for the future. NCSSS has a formal, structured plan for the review of outcome data to inform continuous program enhancement: outcome data from the previous academic year are presented at the first MSW Program Committee meeting of the new academic year. Data from each measure are presented, and the committee has the opportunity to discuss the findings. These data are then used in setting the committee’s agenda for the year to use the data to improve student learning. In addition, outcome data are presented to the full NCSSS Faculty Assembly at a Faculty Retreat held each fall. Faculty have the opportunity to respond to the presentation of data and to discuss the recommended changes. Additionally, outcome data are available for constituents to review on the NCSSS website.
The National Catholic School of Social Service

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
Goals and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

I. Program Description

The Catholic University of America awards the Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work as the mark of highest academic achievement in preparation for active scholarship, research, and leadership in the social work profession. The doctoral program imbues its students with the knowledge, skills, and vision to promote human rights and social justice. It also seeks to further the development of the profession through scholarly research, theory building, and leadership, so that it may increasingly serve society in the prevention, intervention, and alleviation of social problems and enhancement social well-being.

The NCSSS doctoral program in Social Work belongs to the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE), which is composed of directors of established social work/social welfare doctoral programs in accredited universities. GADE’s purpose is not to accredit doctoral programs but “to provide a forum for sharing ideas and strategies, and for strengthening member’s efforts at enhancing doctoral education.” GADE provides guidelines that “outline recommended requirements for doctoral programs” to “assist faculty and academic administrators in reviewing and designing doctoral programs in social work”.

The NCSSS doctoral program builds on and requires an additional 45 semester hours of course work beyond the Masters in Social Work. The curriculum includes a foundation common to all, a choice of two concentrations and an individualized specialization. Students must also pass a comprehensive examination and complete the dissertation with oral defense to earn the degree.

The 18 credit-hour foundation curriculum includes core social work knowledge and descriptive and explanatory theories derived from other disciplines reformulated and integrated into the scientific knowledge base of the profession. Content includes philosophical issues in social work knowledge building (SSS940), selected social science theories (SSS883), theory building in professional social work ethics (SSS 944), the first of three research methodology courses (SSS 950), and the two statistics courses (SSS 947 and SSS 948). Also, during the first semester of the doctoral program, all students, full or part time, must take and pass a non-credit Seminar in Scholarly Writing for Social Work that familiarizes them with the demands of scholarly writing. Writing assignments for the course are tied to assignments in the Philosophical Issues in Social Work Knowledge Development course (SSS 940).

Building on foundation knowledge, students choose one of two concentrations – either Theory and Research in Macro Social Work or Theory and Research in Clinical Social Work – both of which include content on critique of theories and models appropriate to the concentration. In the 15 credit-hour concentration, all students take a second research course that deepens their understanding of multiple designs (SSS 953), and then they choose one of two final research courses – one in either qualitative or quantitative methodology (SSS 955 or SSS 956). Students
complete their doctoral course work with nine credit hours of specialization electives. The specialization may be a field of practice, population, problem, or other area that will provide a focus for the dissertation. Examples include health, mental health, child welfare, child and family, community development, spirituality, ethics, aging, international development, social work education, or poverty. The student formulates a package of three courses (no more than one may be independent study) relevant to the declared specialization with the approval of the advisor. Students may take these courses at NCSSS, within other departments at CUA, within the consortium, or in another accredited university graduate program. Students pass a written comprehensive examination for admission to doctoral candidacy.

The capstone of the Ph.D. program is the production and defense of a scholarly dissertation. Built on a historical perspective, relevant theory, and empirical research, the dissertation fulfills several major functions: It is a product of original research and scholarship that makes a substantive contribution to existing knowledge and the social work profession. The dissertation process encourages original thinking, evaluating, questioning, in-depth objectivity and scholarly independence. The oral defense provides the NCSSS committee and the broader university (represented by the defense chair and secretary) to determine if the candidate both knows the research process and findings of the dissertation and that she or he can present and defend them.

Admission is selective. NCSSS seeks to enroll those who will be successful in all aspects of the Ph.D. program and competent as future social work scholars, researchers or educators.

Application portfolios are reviewed against the following criteria:

1. Evidence of the applicant's readiness for doctoral study including:
   a. capacity for critical and analytical thinking;
   b. ability to understand and apply a broad range of conceptual frameworks such as philosophy, sociology and practice theory; and
   c. facility for strong, clear, cogent and concise critical and analytical writing. These capacities may be demonstrated in previous academic work, especially that of the M.S.W. program, test scores and writing samples such as scholarly works, monographs and agency manuals.

2. Evidence of personal qualifications indicative of a high level of motivation and capacity for independent study and reflective of a strong identification with the social work profession, its values and standards. Evidence of these qualities may be demonstrated in previous volunteer and employed work experience, the purpose statement or the views of those providing recommendations.

Doctoral students and graduates have been the recipients of numerous awards recognizing the excellence of their research skills. Recent accomplishments include three dissertations funded by the American Cancer Society; two graduates’ joint receipt of the Frank Turner Prize of the International Social Work Journal for work stemming from their dissertations, one recipient of the Council on Social Work Education Minority Fellowship Program’s SAMHSA Mental Health and Substance Abuse Fellowship, one recipient of Honorable Mention for the Outstanding Social Work Dissertation Award from the Society for Social Work and
Research, and several peer-reviewed presentations and papers.

Following graduation, NCSSS PhD graduates go on to positions in academia, research, and advanced practice.

II. Goals for Student Learning

Approved by the faculty and explicitly documented in the NCSSS doctoral handbook, students who graduate with a Ph.D. in Social Work will meet the following goals:

1. Contribute to the critique, transformation, and dissemination of knowledge for the profession in response to existing and emerging social problems.
2. Apply humanistic values, ethical principles, and philosophical and theoretical perspectives to the understanding and alleviation of existing and emerging social problems.
3. Promote and enhance the role of social work in society by assuming leadership and research roles in clinical practice, administration, social policy analysis, and social work education to promote and enhance the role of social work in society.

In order to meet the above stated goals, Ph.D. students will demonstrate the following advanced knowledge, skills, and competencies:

1. Master knowledge of the history of social work and social work education, understanding the nature of social work as a professional discipline and the philosophy and basic assumptions of social work education.
2. Distinguish varied paradigms of inquiry, understanding their relation to theory and research, and develop advanced skills of critical thinking, recognizing their relationship to scholarship.
3. Demonstrate competence in scholarly writing, including the crafting of a problem statement, review of relevant, scholarly, theoretical, and empirical literature, and synthesis of ideas into a coherent exposition.
4. Examine, synthesize, and analyze linkages between theories, scientific paradigms of inquiry, and the mission and values of the social work profession.
5. Develop appreciation of the state of social work model development and conceptual approaches with a particular issue or social problem.
6. Deepen understanding of ethical theory and methodology, its application to ethical conflicts in social work practice and research, and the impact of values in major social institutions and structures in society.
7. Develop a working command of the language of science, understanding concepts central to knowledge and theory building and the scientific process.
8. Develop skill in the critique of the relevance, quality, rigor, validity, and reliability of selected empirical methods for the study of specific social work problems.
9. Demonstrate appreciation and skill in the methods and technology of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method inquiry, demonstrating advanced knowledge of research design in investigating issues of importance to social work.
10. Demonstrate ability to formulate research questions, testable hypotheses, identify and carry out appropriate statistical analysis, interpret the results of statistical analysis, and understand statistical analysis presented in social science literature.
11. Propose empirical research questions that examine theories and research pertinent to a particular issue or social problem, taking into consideration differential needs of multicultural groups within a pluralistic society.

12. Develop a scholarly proposal for the systematic study of an issue of relevance to contemporary social work.

### III. Student Assessment and Outcome Measures

1. **Admission:** Students are admitted based on criteria specific to social work professionals holding an MSW degree (see above).

2. **Course work/GPA:** In addition to submitting grades, instructors in the six first-year foundation courses write a narrative report on each student’s readiness for doctoral study within specific domains on a *Feedback on Student Performance form*. Specifically, instructors discuss student engagement with the doctoral program, capacity to work independently, capacity to think critically, and knowledge of the process of constructing a library research paper. The report is shared with the student and forwarded to the program chair. The doctoral program committee reviews all beginning students based on these narratives and, if the group deems it necessary, calls together a Review Committee to determine with the student a plan for strengthening her/his performance.

   NCSSS Ph.D. students are required to maintain a grade point average of 3.0 (B) to be considered in good standing. The grade of C, a grade point average of less than 3.0, or a pattern of multiple Incompletes indicates unsatisfactory progress toward the doctorate. One grade of C or F, or a pattern of multiple Incompletes will result in the convening of a review committee. The receipt of more than one grade of C or below is grounds for dismissal by the Dean.

3. **Advising:** The Doctoral Program has an active advisement system in which all students have the ongoing support of a doctoral faculty member who is not necessarily their instructor. The advisor and program chair monitor progress, especially as documented by the Feedback on Student Performance form (see #2 immediately above) for foundation students. The student advisor is available to the student throughout the process of coursework.

4. **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam:** Following successful completion of the foundation and concentration courses, an NCSSS doctoral student must successfully pass the written comprehensive examination. The purpose of this two-day, 8 hour per day, written exam is to assess the student's ability to organize and integrate knowledge through clear and comprehensively formulated answers written during set time limits.

5. The exam tests specifically all foundation and concentration content, including that of the final research course. Although consisting of two parts (research and application of theory), the written exam is regarded as one entity that a student must satisfactorily pass in one sitting. The program chair assigns two members of the doctoral faculty who grade the written exam as pass, marginal, or fail. A clear pass requires no oral exam. If the responses on one or
both days are considered marginal, the student must take an oral exam on the content of both
days to determine if the exam is a pass or a fail. If one or both days of the written exam are
failed, there is no oral exam, and the student must re-take the entire exam. A student who
incurs two failures in the written comprehensive examination is dismissed from the doctoral
program.

The broad criteria for grading the Written Comprehensive Examination include: a
demonstration of substantive knowledge of the subject area; how the student has applied
the knowledge; the organization and coherence of the material presented; and the quality, rather
than quantity, of the presentation. Specific criteria include: 1.) To what extent does the
response accurately address all components of the question as stated?; 2.) To what extent
does the answer reflect substantive knowledge of the subject area?; 3.) To what extent does
the response reflect knowledge of the relevant literature?; 4.) To what extent does the
response communicate clearly and accurately?; 5.) To what extent does the response reflect
ability to analyze and synthesize on the part of the writer (i.e., the ability to identify central
concepts and show their logical relationships and implications)?; 6.) To what extent does the
response reflect the utilization of knowledge and critical judgment on the part of the
writer (i.e., the ability to move beyond facts to generate underlying questions, evaluate
assumptions and assess implications)?; 7.) To what extent does the response integrate the
relevant components and issues?

6. **Admission to candidacy:** For admission to *candidacy* for the doctoral degree, the student
must have successfully completed 45 or more credit hours of course work and passed the
written comprehensive examination. Candidacy begins on the first day of the semester
following completion of all coursework and successful passing of the comprehensive exam.

7. **Dissertation proposal:** Doctoral dissertation committees are generally composed of three
members knowledgeable about the content and methodology of the candidate’s chosen topic.
The director and at least one member of the committee must be regular NCSSS faculty. All
committee members must have an earned doctorate degree. To assure the quality of
dissertation projects, a candidate may not embark on dissertation research until a proposal,
the “two-pager,” and related documents have survived an extensive review process. After the
candidate’s committee approves the two-page proposal and supporting documentation, the
candidate presents the documents to the Doctoral Program Chair. The chair appoints a
NCSSS Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Review Committee (DPRC), consisting of three
NCSSS faculty members with one member serving as chair. The candidate submits the
proposal and other documents to the members of the DPRC. The program chair organizes a
meeting of the DPRC with the candidate and the dissertation director. At the meeting, the
group discusses the proposal, seeks clarification, and reaches a decision regarding readiness
for submission to the university. The proposal may be approved, not approved or approved
pending modifications. Once approved by the DPRC, the Program chair submits the
materials to the Dean, who endorses it and sends it to the Dean of Graduate Studies and the
CUA Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects for university approval. When the
Dean of Graduate Studies and the Committee for the Protection of Human subjects have
approved the proposal, the candidate may then embark on the dissertation research.
8. **Dissertation Defense**: On completion of the dissertation and approval by the major professor and other committee members, the candidate orally presents and defends the dissertation to an examination board appointed by the Dean of NCSSS through the chair of the doctoral program and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The oral examination board includes, in addition to the candidate’s dissertation committee, two CUA faculty members from outside of NCSSS, one serving as Chair and one serving as Secretary. The oral examination lasts about two hours. Each member of the examining board has one vote, and the candidate must receive a Pass vote from all but one examiner in order to pass the examination. If a candidate fails in the first oral examination, s/he must obtain permission from the school to retake a final oral examination. If the candidate fails a second time, s/he is no longer a doctoral candidate.

9. **Student course and faculty evaluations**: Students evaluate each course and instructor at the end of the semester. Evaluation forms include both numerical and open-ended, narrative items. Evaluation forms are anonymous, and faculty members do not see their evaluations before grades for the semester are posted. [Who?] shares quantitative data from courses with students and other faculty.

10. **Post-Comps Focus Group**: Once each year, doctoral students and candidates who have passed comps and are about to embark on dissertations participate in a focus group guided by a faculty member, who does not teach in the doctoral program. This group provides an opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral program and their experience in it.

11. **Alumni Survey**: Beginning in 2009 and repeating once every five years, NCSSS will send an alumni survey to all graduates for the last 5 years. This survey specifically explores graduates’ views of how the Ph.D. program fulfilled its goals and their experience of courses, comprehensive exam, dissertation process, and preparation for post-graduation employment. The survey also gathers data about employment, salary, publications, presentations, honors.

12. **Progression**: The Program Chair maintains statistics on admission, retention, attrition, and graduation with particular attention to the rate of success in comprehensive exams and the time between admission to candidacy and defense of the dissertation.

### IV. Use of Results to Improve Student Learning

1. **Faculty self-evaluations**: All doctoral course outlines include a course purpose and specific learning objectives that are consistent with the program goals. Doctoral faculty members continually evaluate their course objectives and assignments against the program goals.

2. **Student course and faculty evaluations**: Students evaluate each course and instructor at the end of the semester. Evaluation forms include both numerical and open-ended, narrative
items. Evaluation forms are anonymous. Quantitative data from courses are shared with students and other faculty. Faculty continually change course syllabi and content through feedback from the course evaluations.

3. **Review Committees**: Review Committees provide a formal procedure that benefits students and enhances their learning by dealing constructively with issues, such as educational difficulties, exceptional academic or personal problems, and other similar instances the resolution of which might benefit from or require special attention. The program chair convenes and chairs Review Committees when either a student or relevant faculty feels that any of these problems may have arisen (optional) or a student receives one grade of C or F or otherwise evidences unsatisfactory or marginal work (required). Participants in a Review Committee include the student, the student’s academic adviser, instructors, and, if the student desires, either one representative from the Doctoral Student Association or another member of the NCSSS student body whom the student selects. Typically, the Review Committee gives each participant, including the student, an opportunity to describe the problem and suggest potential resolutions. Based on the exchange at the meeting, the Committee makes a recommendation to help the student successfully complete the program. All recommendations are binding except the recommendation of dismissal. Only the dean may dismiss.

4. **The Doctoral Program Committee**: The Doctoral Program Committee guides NCSSS’s Ph.D. program. Chaired by the Doctoral Program Chair, it is comprised of all faculty members teaching in the doctoral program, as well as a doctoral student representative, which the Doctoral Student Association elects. This Committee formulates policy, continually reviews existing courses and develops new curriculum for presentation to the full faculty. It monitors student progress and reviews results from surveys and focus groups. The Committee provides an ongoing forum for dialogue between faculty and students in the program and ensures the excellence of the NCSSS Ph.D. in Social Work.

The doctoral program committee held an all day retreat in November of 2008. Every aspect of the program from admissions to dissertation defense to exit survey was reviewed and revised. Policy revisions and course revisions must be presented to the full faculty for approval. Through this process, the program committee is continually evaluating both the process and the outcome of the education in the PhD program.