MANUAL FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

I. Objectives of the Doctoral Program

The Doctoral Program at the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago is designed to stimulate and foster the disciplined study of social welfare and social work. The program seeks to deepen students' knowledge of the field of social work and the supporting social sciences so that they are prepared to make contributions to the field through scholarship and teaching. A primary goal is to prepare students for academic positions in schools of social work and social welfare.

The program has a strong theoretical and empirical orientation. It attracts students with clinical, organizational and policy interests. SSA students are trained to develop and evaluate interventions as well as analyze social problems and their ensuing institutional and political responses. It is at the forefront of schools of social work that emphasize the role of social science theory and research in guiding the investigation of social problems and interventions.

The Doctoral Program is flexibly structured so that students can pursue a curriculum matched to their individual interests. It is expected that, by the end of the program, students will have the substantive knowledge, theoretical understanding and methodological skill to pursue independent and innovative scholarly inquiry.

II. Admission

Admissions Process

Information for prospective students on admissions is available on the SSA website. All applications must be submitted electronically. The on-line application is available at https://apply-ssa.uchicago.edu/apply/. SSA admissions staff are available for email (admissions@ssa.uchicago.edu), telephone, and in-person consultation. The due date for application to the Doctoral Program is December 15.

The faculty on the Committee on Doctoral Studies makes decisions regarding admissions offers, in consultation with other faculty members. Review of admissions materials is done during January and February. Admitted applicants are brought to campus in early March to learn about the program and to meet faculty and current students. Admitted applicants are required to make their decisions no later than April 15.
Admissions Requirements

Admission to the Doctoral Program is influenced by the following requirements and considerations:

1. A superior academic record (through transcripts, GRE scores, writing sample, and recommendations) that demonstrates the intellectual potential to engage in a rigorous doctoral program and to contribute to social welfare scholarship.

2. A coherent personal statement that conveys a commitment to social scientific inquiry and describes an interest in pursuing a research agenda in some area of social work or social welfare.

3. Research experience in an university setting or research institute greatly strengthens an application, although prior research experience is not a requirement.

4. Because practice experience in a social work or social welfare-related field is an important background for many kinds of teaching positions and because social work research is often inspired by field experiences, richness of field experience, especially post-master’s degree social work practice, enhances an application.

5. Mastery of written and spoken English.

6. Although most applicants admitted to the program have a master's degree in social work or a related field, applicants are not required to have a master’s degree to apply. A very limited number of applicants who are admitted without a master's degree will complete their master's degree in the course of completing the doctoral program. Students entering with a master's degree in a field other than social work are encouraged to also consider earning a master’s degree from SSA because many schools of social work give priority to hiring faculty with master's degrees in social work. Those interested in doctoral studies who do not have a master's degree apply directly to the Doctoral Program for admission through the combined AM/PhD program.

III. Doctoral Curriculum -- Courses

In consultation with a faculty advisor, each student develops a program of study that includes courses, a qualifying examination, a pre-dissertation research project, a dissertation proposal, and dissertation research. Students develop individualized programs that combine required and elective coursework within SSA, coursework in other University departments, and independent study.
The curriculum is designed to ensure expertise in theory, research methods, and a substantive area of specialization. In selecting courses, students should consider the following:

1. **Total courses.** Students are required to take a minimum of fifteen doctoral level courses. SSA doctoral courses are those with course numbers that begin with the number 5. Other units of the University have different numbering systems.

2. **History course.** All students must take a doctoral level course on the history of the social work profession or the history of social welfare. This course is generally offered as part of the SSA curriculum each academic year.

3. **Statistics.** Students must demonstrate an acceptable level of achievement in research methods and in statistics. Students are required to take a minimum of two graduate level statistics courses. Suitable two-quarter introductory course sequences are offered through several units at the University, including the Harris School and the Sociology Department. Students who have strong backgrounds in statistics may opt to meet the requirement with two more advanced statistics courses.

4. **Research methods.** All students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in research methods. At least five of the fifteen courses are required to be in research methods and statistics offered through SSA or in other units of the University. Students are encouraged to take the Introduction to Research Methods course offered through the SSA Doctoral program. Lists of quantitative and qualitative methods courses offered at the University and guidance for sequencing of classes are posted on the Doctoral Program CANVAS website.

5. **Courses outside of SSA.** At least three of the fifteen courses must be taken in other departments or schools of the University. The three courses should have coherence with one another -- either three courses from the same discipline (e.g., sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, psychology/human development; health studies) or a set of three conceptually linked courses not from the same discipline. In the latter case, the student's advisor and the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies must approve the set of three courses. This requirement is intended to ensure that students will have an adequate grounding in the theoretical approaches and substantive content of at least one field of study outside of social work. Methods courses may not be used to satisfy this requirement. Courses taken outside of SSA must be graduate level courses and not undergraduate level courses offered in the College, which are usually identified by course numbers beginning with a “2.”

6. **Doctoral workshop.** Doctoral students are required to register for the Doctoral Workshop for at least six quarters, usually during the first two years of the
program (SSA 56801), and strongly encouraged to attend the workshop throughout their doctoral studies. This workshop is a requirement although it does not count toward the fifteen required for the degree. The doctoral workshop, which is organized each year by students, provides an opportunity to learn more about the scholarly work of their peers, SSA faculty, and guest scholars. The workshop also includes important presentations related to professional development. When students are unable to register for the Workshop because of a conflict with another class, they may register for the course in a later quarter. Students must have a pass grade for six quarters in the Doctoral Workshop before they can be admitted to candidacy. Passing grades are based exclusively on attendance records.

7. **Dissertation proposal seminar.** Students who have passed the qualifying examination are required to register for the Dissertation Proposal Seminar (SSA 53500) each quarter of their third year of study unless they have already scheduled a proposal hearing. This seminar does not count as one of the fifteen required doctoral courses. This faculty-led seminar supports students in the development of their thesis proposal with the goal of having a completed proposal by the end of Spring quarter.

8. **Independent study courses.** Students may register for the Individual Readings and Research course (SSA 59900) as often as they choose, but the course can only be used to count toward three of the fifteen courses needed for the doctoral degree. Students are encouraged to register for this independent study course to work on manuscripts that they will submit for publication and to gain mastery in an area relevant to their dissertation topic.

9. **SSA Master’s program courses.** Doctoral students may register for courses from the SSA masters’ curriculum (course numbers beginning with 3, 4, or 6), but those courses will not be counted toward the fifteen required courses for the doctoral degree. If a course in the masters’ curriculum is taught by a regular SSA faculty member, a student may register with that faculty member to take an Individual Readings and Research course at the doctoral level (SSA 59900). In this situation, the doctoral student should attend the class sessions, do the class readings, and arrange with the faculty member for additional assignments and office hours to supplement the master's level course.

10. **Courses at other universities.** The University participates in academic exchange programs, including the Academic Exchange Program. These programs allow doctoral students to take advantage of opportunities not available at the University of Chicago, including registration in classes at other institutions, including locally, Northwestern University and the University of Illinois Chicago. Students can only register for courses that are not already offered at the University of Chicago. For eligibility requirements, admissions and an online applications, see [http://grad.uchicago.edu/career-development/academic-exchange-program](http://grad.uchicago.edu/career-development/academic-exchange-program)
11. **Course load.** A typical doctoral student course load is 300 units (or 400 units if the fourth course is the Doctoral Theory Workshop). Doctoral students are required to be registered for courses totaling at least 300 units each quarter (autumn, winter, spring) until they graduate. Students graduating in summer quarter are required to register for 300 units that summer quarter only. Most classroom courses, including Individual Readings and Research and the Doctoral Theory Workshop are equal to 100 units of credit. Ph.D. students in their third year who have not yet defended their dissertation proposal should register for Dissertation Research (SSA 54600) if they have selected their dissertation chair or Advanced Study (SSA 70000) if they have not. Students who have been admitted to candidacy should register for Dissertation Research (SSA 54600) with the faculty member chairing their committee. In registering for SSA 54600 or SSA 70000 students should register in increments of 100, 200, or 300 units so that the combined total number of course units equals 300 each quarter. Registering for more than 400 units may result in additional charges on the tuition bill that will not be covered by the doctoral scholarship.

12. **Advanced studies registration units.** In order to be compliant with federal financial aid regulations, the School must insure that all full-time students are enrolled quarterly in course work and maintain satisfactory academic progress in their program of study. Effective Winter Quarter 2012, all doctoral students who fail to register for 300 units (typically 3 courses) will be enrolled automatically in an "Advanced Studies" course (SSA 70000), which will carry up to 300 units. All students enrolled in this course must receive a grade for the course for every quarter and the grade will be recorded by the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies. The grade to be assigned to this course will either be a grade of "satisfactory" (S) or "unsatisfactory" (U). A grade of "U" is to be entered in a particular quarter if a student's faculty advisor communicates to the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies that the student is not making satisfactory progress or if a student has not met specific academic requirements set by an area or the academic advisor.

13. **Course offering information.** For details of courses offered within the School, see the current Course Catalogue and Course Schedule for the current academic year posted on the MySSA website: [https://myssa.uchicago.edu/class/schedule/](https://myssa.uchicago.edu/class/schedule/). For more information on courses offered at SSA visit the course catalog page: [http://registrar.uchicago.edu/page/catalogs-and-announcements](http://registrar.uchicago.edu/page/catalogs-and-announcements). For details of courses offered in other departments of the University visit the course search website at: [http://coursesearch.uchicago.edu](http://coursesearch.uchicago.edu). Be sure to focus on graduate courses and not courses offered for undergraduates in the College. For information as to when particular courses are offered across the University visit [http://coursesearch.uchicago.edu](http://coursesearch.uchicago.edu). For information on when courses were scheduled prior to the 2016-2017 academic year see: [http://timeschedules.uchicago.edu](http://timeschedules.uchicago.edu).
V. Combined AM/PhD Program

A small number of students who have not previously earned an MSW degree will be admitted to the combined AM/PhD program through which they will earn SSA’s professional social work degree while in the doctoral program. Doctoral students who want to receive a master’s degree in social work from SSA must complete all the usual requirements for both programs.

Students in the combined program usually take the AM program core courses in their first year, along with a field placement. Some doctoral level courses may be used to meet requirements for both degree, and the combined AM/PhD program usually takes a year longer to complete than the PhD program alone.

Doctoral students seeking the MA degree must take a minimum of 18 courses to complete the master’s degree. These courses include core requirements and requirements within one of two concentrations selected by the student: Clinical Direct Practice or Social Administration. All doctoral students seeking an AM degree must submit their proposed course of study for fulfilling the requirements of the joint degree program to the Doctoral Committee and the Dean of Students for approval in the Autumn Quarter of their first year. A worksheet describing the core requirements and the doctoral courses that meet those requirements is posted on the doctoral program CANVAS web page.

At the beginning of the quarter when students believe they will have fulfilled all the requirements for the AM, they should submit an updated copy of this form to the Dean of Students and the Chair of the Doctoral Committee to request being put on the list for convocation.

All requirements for the AM degree must be fulfilled before achieving doctoral candidacy.

Students in the AM/PhD program are provided an extra year to complete doctoral program requirements outlined in this handbook. The exception is that the time to degree requirement is the same for PhD and AM/PhD students.

IV. Funding Doctoral Education

A. Students in Years 1-5

To ensure that all students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the program, all PhD students receive a five year financial aid package and all AM/PhD students receive a six year financial aid package. Funding is contingent on the following guidelines:
1. **Tuition and Fees.** Doctoral scholarships include full tuition and fees during the three academic quarters (autumn, winter, and spring) for the first five years. Exception: AM/PhD students will also receive a scholarship that covers full tuition and fees in the 6th year of the program. The award for fees covers the student life fee, the CTA U Pass fee, and the student insurance plan (single coverage). Health coverage for dependents carries additional fees which must be paid by the student. Tuition is covered during the three academic quarters (autumn, winter, spring). Student insurance is covered for the three academic quarters as well as the summer quarter.

2. **Stipend.** All students receive a stipend from SSA. The amount of that stipend is specified at the time of admission. As this handbook is being updated it is $25,000. On occasion stipend rates are increased for all current students. PhD and AM/PhD students are provided five years of stipend support.

3. **Work expectations for stipend eligibility during first two years.** To receive their stipend during the first and second years, students are expected to work with a faculty member as a research assistant (RA) for 10-12 hours a week during the 30-week academic year or as a block during the summer months (approximately 300-360 hours). It is the responsibility of the student to identify a faculty member with whom they will work as an RA no later than the end of the autumn quarter, even if the project will not be initiated until later in the year.

4. **Work expectations for stipend eligibility during the third, fourth, and fifth years.** To receive their stipend during the third, fourth years, and fifth years, students are expected to work as a teaching assistant for one course each year. Teaching assistant (TA) assignments will be decided through collaboration with the Deputy Dean for Curriculum and the Curriculum Program Manager. Priority for TA positions is given to third, fourth, and fifth year students, although occasionally second-year students may work as TAs. Students are not limited to being a TA in only one course a year, and sometimes complete their obligation to teach before entering their fifth year. Once students have completed three teaching assistantships, their obligation for teaching is completed, regardless of their year in the program. For example, students who TA for two courses during their third years, might chose not to TA during their fourth year. Note that only certain courses at SSA qualify for teaching assistants. These are usually courses in the core curriculum, that have large grading workloads, or that have large enrollments. On occasion faculty whose courses would not qualify for a teaching assistant may choose to hire a graduate teaching assistant using their personal funds. That kind of TA work does not count toward the work expectation for the stipend.

5. **Issuing of checks.** Stipends are generally paid to students in the first week of each quarter. Students will receive email notification from the Office of the Dean of Students when the check is available to be picked up.
6. **Outside work.** Students receiving a stipend cannot work more than 15 hours a week in other employment during the 9-month academic year. The fifteen hours does not include the work required for the RA and TA stipends. Students should discuss their outside employment with their academic advisors. If it is learned that students are participating in substantial outside work and that they have not informed the Doctoral Committee, stipend payment may be withheld during the time of that outside work.

7. **Work at the university.** University rules limit student work at the University to a maximum of 19.5 hours a week during the three quarters of the academic year, although students can work more hours during quarter breaks and during the summer.

8. **Outside funding.** Students are strongly encouraged to apply for dissertation grants and other sources of funding to supplement these awards. This is good professional development experience and helps to build a strong academic CV. If students in their first five years of study are awarded stipends from outside of SSA, their SSA stipend support may be reduced. For students receiving outside stipend support of greater than $8,000/year, the SSA stipend of $23,000 will be reduced by the difference between the outside award and $8,000. For example, if a student receives an outside stipend award of $10,000, the SSA Stipend will be reduced to $21,000/year (i.e., $10,000-$8,000 = $2,000 reduction). Summer SSA stipend support will not be reduced even if the student receives outside stipend support to cover summer quarter. SSA stipends are not affected by outside awards that are specifically for research expenses. The UChicagoGrad offers support in identifying fellowship opportunities, including an online data base of fellowships and individual counseling. [http://grad.uchicago.edu/grad_fellowships_funding/](http://grad.uchicago.edu/grad_fellowships_funding/). Some fellowship applications, including most Federal applications, need to be submitted through the University. For those applications, students should consult with the SSA Director of Grants and Contracts at least a month prior to the application deadline.

9. **Summer funding.** Effective Summer 2014, students in their first 5 years of the program are permitted to apply for a summer stipend of $3,000 to assist with program and/or living expenses while pursuing a project or research pertaining to their PhD studies. Students may apply for up to 3 summers of stipend support ($3,000 per summer) if they are eligible. During spring quarter, the Office of the Dean of Students will notify students of the application procedures for summer stipends. Stipends are then disbursed during the first week of summer quarter. The following autumn quarter, students are expected to submit a post-summer stipend report on their project or research.

10. **Satisfactory progress in program.** SSA funding is contingent on satisfactory progress in the program. Based on University guidelines satisfactory progress includes being enrolled full time (300 units/quarter), maintaining a satisfactory grade average, and completing any incomplete courses before the beginning of
the following autumn quarter. More importantly, satisfactory progress involves timely completion of program benchmarks and successfully completing the annual advising review process. See Section XIV for more details on how failure to make adequate progress may have implications for continuation of financial aid. Note that satisfactory progress includes having submitted a dissertation proposal before beginning the fourth year of study.

**Students Beyond Year 5 in the Program**

1. Doctoral students in their sixth year and beyond will receive 82% tuition scholarships for the academic year (autumn, winter, spring). Exception: AM/PhD students will also receive a scholarship that covers tuition and fees in the 6\(^{th}\) year of the program. Students in their fifth years and beyond pay tuition at the advanced residency rate established by the Bursar’s Office: [http://bursar.uchicago.edu/page/ tuition-rates](http://bursar.uchicago.edu/page/ tuition-rates). Students remaining in the program beyond the fifth year (or sixth year in the case of AM/PhD students) are responsible for paying the balance of their tuition not covered by the scholarship. They are also responsible for paying their student life fee, CTA U Pass fee, and health insurance each quarter unless they waive insurance coverage by showing proof of alternate comparable coverage.

2. Students who are selected to work as teaching assistants or lecturers beyond the fifth year will receive SSA scholarship aid that covers 100% tuition and fees, including the student life fee, CTA U Pass fee, and health insurance in the quarters in which the teaching occurs.

3. Students who anticipate remaining in the program more than five years are strongly encouraged to seek fellowships from outside the School to support their dissertation research and to begin that process at least a year before funding is needed.

4. Students who have not been awarded their degree by summer quarter of their tenth year in the program will be withdrawn as students. They will no longer be charged tuition, but may be subject to repayment of student loans.

**Federal Student Loans**

Some students require federal loans to supplement their SSA Scholarship, due to specific family and/or living circumstances. Students who wish to apply for federal student loans must file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [http://www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) as well as a University of Chicago Application for Loans and Federal Assistance at [http://sla.uchicago.edu](http://sla.uchicago.edu). Federal regulations require proof of half time registration at the University in order to qualify for federal loans in a given quarter.
Emergency Funds

There are several kinds of limited emergency loans available through the Office of the Dean of Students or through the University. The Student Loan Administration (4th floor of the University Bookstore) has a maximum $250 short-term emergency loan. This loan voucher may be cashed on the same day at the Bursar's Office. Repayment is due in 30 days.

SSA has several limited emergency loan accounts with a maximum of $3,000 per academic year. These loans may either be short-term (to be repaid in 90 days) or long-term (to be repaid after leaving the University). Interest is charged for long-term emergency loans and a co-signer is needed. These loans are available through the Office of the Dean of Students and take up to 10 working days to process.

Travel Awards

Students who have had their work accepted for presentation at academic conferences are eligible to apply to the Dean of Students for up to 2 meetings and academic year at $300 per meeting to support their travel. In addition, students in their third year or above may apply for the GSA Travel Fund through the Office of Graduate Student Affairs to support travel for conference presentations or international dissertation research. For more information visit: http://grad.uchicago.edu/fellowships_funding/featured_fellowships/featured_fellowships_gsa_travel_fund/ new link: http://grad.uchicago.edu/life-community/graduate-council/travel-fund

Graduate Council Travel Fund for Conference Travel
http://sg.uchicago.edu/travel-fund/

VI. Academic Procedures and Regulations

PhD Residency Statuses

The University uses a system of continuous registration that assigns students to residence statuses based on their years of enrollment in a doctoral program. Students who are in “Scholastic Residence” typically are enrolled in courses, taking exams, and preparing to conduct a dissertation. Students who are in “Advanced Residence” typically are conducting dissertation research. Residence status determines the amount of tuition that students are charged, with Scholastic Residence tuition higher than Advanced Residence tuition.

For SSA doctoral cohorts enrolling in 2010 or after, SSA PhD students and AM/PhD students are enrolled in Scholastic Residence for four years and begin Advanced Residence in their fifth year of study.
Students in Advanced Residence are eligible for all the privileges and rights of full-time students, such as access to the University Health Service and medical insurance coverage, University housing, computer facilities, libraries, career and placement services, and athletic facilities.

**Residence in Chicago**

Students who are receiving stipend support from SSA are expected to physically be present in Chicago during the academic year unless their reason for absence is to collect dissertation data. Students who wish to reside outside the Chicago area will only continue to receive financial support with a plan approved by their academic advisor and the Dean of Students. Plans to leave the Chicago area generally would not be approved unless the student has been admitted to candidacy.

**Registration**

Quarterly registration is done on-line through the registrar’s office. Students will be notified by the Office of the Dean of Students each quarter regarding registration procedures. Prior to registration, students are expected to meet with their Academic Advisor to plan their courses for that quarter. Other questions regarding registration may be directed toward the Student Affairs Specialist in the Office of the Dean of Students.

**Academic Load**

The SSA Doctoral program is a full-time program. The normal academic load is 300 units plus the doctoral workshop. See IV-11 above for more information.

**Grade Average**

Most doctoral students have grade point averages greater than 3.5. A student whose grade point average falls below 3.0 in any three consecutive quarters will be terminated from the program. Grades of P (pass) are not counted in the calculation of grade point averages.

**Pass-Fail Grading**

Not more than three of the fifteen doctoral courses required for the degree may be taken under P-D-F grading, provided the P/D/F system is available for the course in which the student wishes to use it. The following courses that are central to the SSA doctoral curriculum must be taken for letter grades: history of the profession (SSA 552), introduction to statistics (SSA 540/541 or substitute), research methods for social work (SSA 549), and theory and research (SSA 566).

The choice of grading system, which will apply to a specific course, is the student's. The student must inform the instructor of their decision to take the course for a letter
grade or P/D/F no later than the fourth week of the quarter. Grading policies in other professional schools and departments of the University vary and are not always consistent with those of SSA, particularly with regard to the use of Pass/D/Fail. Students taking courses outside of SSA are advised to check the relevant grading policy with the course instructor before registering. It should be noted that grading is limited to Pass/D/Fail in certain courses in other units of the University.

**Incompletes**

Although doctoral students can take grades of “incomplete” for courses, it is expected that courses will be completed promptly and no later than the beginning of the following autumn quarter. Students who have incompletes on their record at the beginning of the next autumn quarter will not normally be approved for receipt of SSA financial aid or be allowed to take the qualifying examination. Students with incompletes on their records may be ineligible for Federal student loans.

**Leave of Absence**

During Scholastic Residence, a student may request a one-year leave of absence from the University. A leave of absence requires approval of the student’s academic advisor and the Dean of Students.

A student in Advanced Residence may apply for a one-year leave of absence only if temporarily incapacitated by major illness or injury. Applications for such a leave must be approved by the Dean of Students and granted by the Office of the Provost.

**Graduate Student Parent Policy**

A variety of academic modifications and leaves of absence are available to students who are pregnant or caring for a new child. These are described in detail in the Graduate Student Parents Policy on the following website: [https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/parents](https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/parents). As early as possible, students who are anticipating a new child should arrange to meet with the SSA Dean of Students who must approve all academic modification plans or leaves of absence and can help students understand the choices available.

**Other Sources of Information about Procedures**

For additional information about grading policy, changes of registration, or other academic regulations, see the Student Manual of University Policies and Regulations ([http://studentmanual.uchicago.edu](http://studentmanual.uchicago.edu)), the SSA Student Handbook ([http://ssa.uchicago.edu/student-handbook](http://ssa.uchicago.edu/student-handbook)), and the current SSA Announcements ([https://upcomingcatalog.uchicago.edu/ssa/](https://upcomingcatalog.uchicago.edu/ssa/)).
VII. Academic Advising and Student Supports

Choice of Advisor

In order to help ensure that incoming students get the in-depth advising they need to develop a customized program of study, the Committee on Doctoral Studies selects a first-year academic advisor for each incoming student before orientation week, matching theoretical and substantive interests, and taking student requests and faculty experience at SSA into account.

Students’ advisors are not necessarily the same faculty member who they work with to fulfill their research assistantships. Most students change academic advisors as their course of study evolves and can do so at any time. If a student has determined that they would like to transition to a different faculty advisor (and if that faculty member has agreed), students should simply notify the Student Affairs Specialist in the Dean of Students office.

Once a student has been admitted to candidacy, the chair of the student’s dissertation committee later assumes the responsibilities of the academic advisor.

Role of the Academic Advisor

The academic advisor has the following primary roles:

*Educational planning:* Taking the student’s objectives into account, the academic advisor will assist in the development of a general educational plan that the student can follow. This plan should address the selection of courses, choice of pre-dissertation project, choice of qualifying exam focus, pursuit of research experiences, academic publishing, and choice of teaching experiences.

*Developing professional networks:* The academic advisor will help the student identify other scholars at the University and nationally who share their interests. The advisor will encourage the student to develop relationships with scholars who share their substantive and methodological interests, including those who might become members of the student’s dissertation committee. The academic advisor will help the student become familiar with professional associations and meetings relevant to the student’s area of study and of opportunities for funding in their area of interest.

Responsibilities of the Student

Students are expected to take initiative in developing relationships with their advisor and other faculty at the School of Social Service Administration and the University at-large who share their scholarly interests. Students have primary responsibility for identifying faculty members who can offer the best mentorship for them.
Many student interactions with advisors are informal (e.g., in the lobby at SSA, during social events), in the classroom, or in conjunction with work on research projects. It is important that students be present in the school to interact with faculty in these informal settings. It is also important that students schedule time with advisors that are devoted exclusively to discussions of their educational and professional planning. At a minimum, first and second year students should schedule a meeting with their advisor every quarter before it is time to register for classes. In addition, first year students should schedule a meeting at the end of the Autumn quarter to discuss with their advisor their educational plan for their time at SSA. All students are expected to meet with their advisor during the spring quarter to discuss their progress in the program and to complete the Advising Review for submission to the Committee on Doctoral Studies.

**Individualized Educational Plan**

First year students are expected to submit to the Committee on Doctoral Studies a written education plan approved by their advisor. The plan should briefly summarize the student’s area of scholarly interests. It should identify the types of courses the student plans to take to prepare to study that topic, to develop theoretical expertise, to prepare for the qualifying examination, and to develop methodological expertise. The plan should also identify the student’s plan for gaining mentored research experience, for gaining teaching experience, and for publishing. This plan should be submitted to the Student Affairs Specialist no later than the last day of November, Autumn Quarter of the student’s first year in the program. The Committee on Doctoral Studies will review each student’s plan at their December meeting and provide feedback to students and their advisors.

**Annual Advising Review**

To aid program planning and evaluate student progress, the Committee on Doctoral Studies requires that students submit a formal Advising Review late in the spring quarter of each year. Guidelines for this review are posted on the doctoral program CHALK website and are distributed by email to students during the spring quarter. Students are expected to update their CV as part of this review. The Advising Review is intended to provide opportunities for structured student-advisor discussions around issues of student learning and development and student professional goals. Completing the advising review necessitates that the student schedule a meeting with their advisor that is devoted solely to the topic of educational planning and student progress. At these meetings students should revisit the content of their Individualized Educational Plan from their first year and/or their progress since the prior year’s advising review.

The Committee on Doctoral Studies meets in June to discuss the advising reviews. Should the Committee have concerns related to a particular student’s progress, the student will be notified and asked to meet with the Chair of the Doctoral Committee and/or the Dean of Students. Students who fail to submit the advising review in a timely manner will have their financial aid placed on hold until it is submitted.
**Student Supports through the Office of the Dean of Students**

The academic advisor may not be the appropriate person to support the student in all areas of their life. The Office of the Dean of Students offers a broad range of supports for students around issues such as scholarship distribution, registration assistance, dissertation hearing logistics, and financial assistance as well as provides information about degree requirements, University health services, financial aid eligibility, and other academic and personal supports.

**Academic Job Market Support**

SSA provides support for students who are nearing the end of the doctoral studies and looking for academic jobs. The Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies and the Director of Career Services hold meetings each spring to discuss the job search process. The Director of Career Services will work with students to prepare their CVs for the job market. The Director of Communication will arrange for professional photographs to be taken of students in early September and will design a CV book of students who are on the job market that will be distributed to deans of all American schools of social work in late September so that they will be available before the annual meetings of the Conference on Social Work Education. The CV book is also posted on the SSA web site.

The Director of Career Services maintains an electronic list of academic positions and postdoctoral fellowships that is accessible to students who are nearing the end of their doctoral studies.

Students who are on the job market should plan to present their dissertation research at one of the doctoral workshops during the autumn quarter. When students are invited by a university for a campus interview, they will also want to schedule an additional practice “job talk.” The student and dissertation chair should select a time for this practice job talk and then ask the Student Affairs Specialist in the Office of the Dean of Students to arrange for a room and audiovisual equipment and to distribute an announcement to the faculty and doctoral students. People in attendance will give the student feedback about their presentation.

The best preparation for the job market – besides developing one’s research and teaching credentials – is attending presentations at the SSA doctoral workshops and attending colloquia where applicants for SSA faculty positions are presenting their research.

**Support in Applying for Fellowships**

Students are encouraged to apply for fellowships and research grants during their time at SSA to supplement their income, to pay for research expenses, and to receive recognition for their scholarship. Knowing how to write effective proposals for research and travel funding is an important academic skill. It is recommended that
all students submit at least one funding proposal while a doctoral student and that they seek mentorship from faculty and staff in that process.

Announcements of fellowship opportunities are regularly distributed through the doctoral student listserv. The university Office of Graduate Affairs maintains searchable data bases of fellowship opportunities: http://grad.uchicago.edu/fellowships_funding/fellowship_database/. new link: http://grad.uchicago.edu/fellowships/fellowship-database

Students should submit fellowship and grant applications far in advance of deadlines. It is particularly important for students to identify early in the process whether the application must be submitted through the University or directly by the student. If the fellowship application needs to be submitted by the University, which is usually the case for Federal applications, the student must work closely with the SSA Director of Grants and Contracts, beginning at least two months before the application is due. Students should also determine well in advance of the due date whether applications require letters of recommendation or other endorsements from faculty or from the School. The Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies can write letters describing the SSA doctoral program. The Dean of Students can write letters that certify a student is in good standing.

VIII. Research Experiences and Requirements

At the heart of doctoral education is learning research skills. Although courses can teach some research methods, many research skills are best learned through mentored research experiences. While doctoral students should seek a range of opportunities to gain research skills, the program has two requirements that are focused on developing research skills before students begin their independent dissertation research.

Research Assistantships

In each of their first two years in the program, students are expected to spend 300 - 360 hours in research assistantships with SSA faculty members. In those assistantships, students collaborate on faculty research projects. Students select the faculty projects with which they would like to work. Those decisions should be based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the substantive topic of the project, the opportunity to develop relationships with faculty and other members of faculty research teams, the opportunity to gain academic publications, and what specific research skills will be learned. Students often find research assistantships to be opportunities to develop skills in data cleaning and analysis, use of research software, preparing IRB protocols, writing interviews, conducting interviews, data coding, proposal writing, developing relationships with field sites, preparation of conference abstracts, and manuscript preparation. In the first few weeks in the doctoral program, students are encouraged to meet with a variety of faculty members to learn about their ongoing and upcoming research projects and opportunities that might exist with those projects. Although sometimes students will
do their research assistantship with the same faculty member for two years, it is often desirable for the student to get experiences on different research projects.

Each fall quarter, at the beginning of their research assistantship, students are expected to meet with their research mentor to develop a mutual set of goals and expectations for the year. Those should be documented in writing and submitted to the Student Affairs Specialist.

**Pre-dissertation Research Project**

Students are required to complete a pre-dissertation research project. The pre-dissertation research project should be submitted to the office of the Dean of Students and will be reviewed by the Committee on Doctoral Studies. Many students submit these in conjunction with their annual advising review. Beginning with students enrolling in 2010, the Pre-dissertation Research Project is required to be a manuscript submitted for publication as an article in a journal or a chapter in a book. The manuscript could be an empirical report, a critical analysis of the literature, or a theoretical piece. The project that is submitted should be work that is conducted while at SSA and may be done in conjunction with other work within the doctoral program. Most commonly, pre-dissertation projects will grow out of research assistantships at SSA or elsewhere at the University of Chicago or from papers initially written by students as course requirements, but further developed to be suitable for submission for publication, usually under the guidance of the instructor from the class. Manuscripts may be co-authored with faculty or others, but if the student is not the first author, the first author needs to attest to the student’s role in preparing the manuscript. The pre-dissertation research project may be submitted to the Dean of Students at any time, but normally would be completed by the end of the second year of study and must be submitted before admission to candidacy. It is appropriate for students to register for independent study courses that focus on preparation of the project.

**IX. Qualifying Examination**

Students are required to pass a qualifying examination. The goals of the exam are to achieve a common understanding of the history, philosophy, and principles of the profession of social work and social welfare; to acquire a grounding in relevant theoretical perspectives; to make a productive start on individualized study leading to a dissertation proposal; and to ensure that students have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to advance in the doctoral program.

The doctoral exam is overseen by a faculty member who is appointed by the Dean to be the “Doctoral Examiner.” The Examiner meets with second year students in the winter quarter to establish the dates of the exam and to answer student questions about the exam.

The exam is offered in September before beginning the third year of study, with a time for make-up questions scheduled in January. AM/PhD students typically take their
qualifying exams in the fall before beginning the fourth year of study. Students eligible to take the examination are asked to indicate their intention to do so in the spring quarter prior to the exam.

The basis for the examination is a list of readings that is revised annually by the faculty as a whole. Readings on the list are grouped by important domains of relevance to social work and social welfare scholarship. The domains include psychological processes, life course, organizations, social inequality, culture, economics, and political processes. Sample examination questions from previous years will be shared with students. During the summer, articles and chapters from the readings lists are made available electronically to students through a CHALK web site for those students taking the exam. Books and large sections of books are on reserve in the SSA library.

The exam format is open-book and take-home. Students are given one week to answer three questions written by the faculty: one on the history and philosophy of social work and two from the reading list domains. Students choose the two domains.

Every exam question is graded by two members of the faculty. The grading is “double blind.” Faculty do not know which student’s writing they are reading, and students do not know who the faculty graders are. The Examiner usually provides students with exam results the first weekend of October. No results are released until all exam questions have been graded.

Students who fail one or two questions will have the opportunity to retake the question(s) the following January. This will mean writing a response to a new question (on history and philosophy or on the conceptual domains). If the student does not pass all the question(s) retaken during the January exam, he or she will need to retake the full exam the following autumn.

Students who fail all three questions will have the opportunity to retake the entire exam the following fall.

Any student who does not pass the full exam by the second fall examination period, will be asked to leave the program.

Students for whom English is a second language or who have a disability that affects the taking of the examination may request permission from the Doctoral Examiner for extra time to prepare the examination responses.

X. Teaching Experiences

SSA doctoral students have many opportunities to gain classroom teaching experience and to prepare for careers as educators.

Teaching Assistantships
All SSA doctoral students receiving financial aid from the School are expected to serve as a teaching assistant in one course in each of their third, fourth, and fifth years of study. Teaching assistantships are assigned by the Deputy Dean for the Curriculum and the Curriculum Program Manager based on expected enrollments in master’s program classes and on doctoral students’ particular areas of expertise.

**Teaching Workshops**

The Doctoral Workshops each year offer approximately eight sessions focused on topics in social work education and on teaching techniques. These sessions are particularly useful to advanced doctoral students who are already beginning to teach. The teaching workshop sessions are organized each year by a doctoral student who is selected through a competitive process and receives a stipend. The workshop organizer is chosen during the spring quarter of the previous year.

**Instructors**

Some advanced SSA PhD students will have the opportunity to teach courses independently. These opportunities occur when there are not faculty available to teach required or otherwise important courses in the master’s curriculum. Most opportunities for teaching occur through the Teaching Apprenticeship Program.

**Teaching Apprenticeship Program**

The Teaching Apprenticeship Program is designed to give doctoral students supervised teaching experiences in core courses as part of their professional development. A secondary purpose is to insure that doctoral students who teach in the SSA Master’s program have adequate preparation. In this program, doctoral students and faculty would have the opportunity to work together in teaching core first-year courses in the A.M. program and occasionally other required courses in the clinical or social administration concentrations.

In the first year of the program, a doctoral student teaching apprentice serves as a teaching assistant (TA) for the course. The expectation is that the professor of the course will arrange opportunities for students to participate in preparing and delivering lectures, give them feedback on teaching style, and otherwise help students think through the nuts and bolts of organizing and teaching a course. Ideally the apprentice will actively participate in some part of each class session and will be fully responsible for at least one class session. It is the responsibility of the professor to involve the apprentice in preparation of the course syllabus and to meet weekly with the apprentice to debrief about class sessions and to plan for upcoming classes. Although the apprentice will be involved in normal TA work such as grading and preparation of course documents, it is expected that the apprentice role would not be limited to such activities.
If the doctoral student apprentice seems sufficiently versed in the content area and has sufficient mastery of teaching skills, in the second year, he or she would progress to teaching a section of the course independently. Whether the apprentice advances to the second year of the program will depend on feedback from the professor and the needs of the School for instructors. During the second year of the program, the faculty mentor will review course materials such as the syllabus, to meet formally several times a quarter with the apprentice to discuss progress, to be available to problem solve on an ongoing basis, and to observe at least one class session.

**Teaching Certificate**

The SSA Doctoral Certificate of Teaching Program is designed to assist doctoral students in developing a reflective approach to teaching and in presenting evidence of their commitment to teaching in an increasingly competitive academic job market. The program emphasizes the scholarship of teaching and the development of a teaching portfolio. The requirements for the Certificate are posted on the Doctoral Program CHALK website.

**University Teaching Resources**

In addition to opportunities offered at SSA, students should take advantage of opportunities offered at the Chicago Center for Teaching (http://teaching.uchicago.edu). The Center offers general preparation for students who are planning to be teaching assistants or to teach independently, as well as workshops on specific areas of teaching.

**XI. Dissertation Proposal and Admission to Candidacy**

**General**

Students are required to complete a dissertation in their area of specialization. The dissertation is designed to afford the student an opportunity to make a contribution to social work scholarship by conducting competent research that furthers theory as well as knowledge of social problems and social interventions.

**Acceptable Dissertation Topics**

SSA dissertations are expected to pose a question or questions for study that fall broadly within the area of social work or social welfare; that has substantive, theoretical, and/or methodological significance; and that has not been satisfactorily resolved by existing knowledge. SSA recognizes that there are many different forms of contribution to knowledge, to theory, to improvement of practice, to research methods, and to new syntheses or analyses of existing knowledge. SSA prescribes no single type of investigation, methodology, or source material. It permits a wide range of qualitative or quantitative studies. It permits library, field,
simulation, experimental, and survey approaches. Students sometimes collect their own data, but also sometimes rely on secondary data. A dissertation project may be one large study or several smaller studies united by a common theme. Although the University of Chicago does not have an official “three paper dissertation” policy, SSA students, with consultation from their dissertation chair have the option of submitting a dissertation that includes within it multiple pieces of empirical work, each formatted like a journal article.

For a dissertation topic to be acceptable there should be a reasonable expectation that the proposed investigation can be satisfactorily completed. This involves appraisal of the source of data, of the methods of investigation proposed, and of the student's qualifications to carry out the particular investigation. It is common for students initially to select dissertation topics that are too ambitious for the scope of a dissertation.

**Procedures for Dissertation Proposal, Proposal Hearing, and Admission to Candidacy**

1. **Selection of dissertation topic:** The student selects and formulates the topic and questions for study. Discussions with relevant members of the faculty should be held. This process can begin as early as the first year of the program. During spring quarter of the second year of the program, students are expected to submit to the Committee on Doctoral Studies, a one- to two-page overview of their dissertation question(s) and preliminary plans for conducting the dissertation. This plan needs to have been reviewed by at least two faculty members and revised according to their feedback.

2. **Selection of dissertation advisor (chair) and committee:** Beginning in the second year, the student should discuss dissertation interests with several faculty members. Through this process, the student locates a faculty member—the dissertation advisor—who agrees to work with the student on development of a dissertation proposal in an area of mutual interest and to chair the student’s dissertation committee. The selection of a dissertation advisor would normally be made no later than the fall of the third year. Dissertation advisors must be members of SSA’s tenure-track faculty. They do not need to be tenured members of the faculty.

The student should also select two other members for the dissertation committee. One of these must be a member of the SSA tenure-track faculty, and the other must be an “external member.” The external member must have a doctorate and hold a formal academic appointment in another department at the University of Chicago or at another university. Committee members are usually selected to have expertise that complements that of the dissertation committee chair.

In choosing dissertation committees, it is important that students identify members who collectively expertise in both the substantive topic of the study and the study methods.
1. **Content of the dissertation proposal:** With the guidance of this committee, and possibly others, the student develops a proposal for review and approval. A dissertation proposal should contain a well-developed plan for the research. A substantial proportion of the document should be devoted to elucidation of the research plan. This description should be relatively free of contingencies having to do with such matters as agency cooperation and availability of data.

When scholars submit proposals requesting research funding or travel funding, they are expected to present their ideas in a succinct manner with page limits. Dissertation proposals should similarly be succinct. Although SSA does not have a page limit for dissertation proposals, the proposal should normally be no longer than 25 pages and should include the following points:

   a) General statement of purpose – aims of the study

   b) Substantive discussion of the significance or potential importance of the study for social work and social welfare specifically.

   c) A synthesis/summary of the state of relevant knowledge including an explanation of how the study will add to and build on theory. This is not an exhaustive review of the literature.

   d) The questions to be posed, and if epistemologically appropriate, the hypotheses to be tested.

   e) The plan of research with attention given to definition of major concepts, statement of assumptions, specification of sources and nature of data, methods and techniques to be used, and a suggested plan for analysis and interpretation of data. In instances where instruments have yet to be developed, a clear plan for instrument development should be presented. The proposal should present a clear operational plan concerning data reduction and analysis. Appendices with instruments or preliminary data analysis may be submitted.

   The format of the dissertation proposal can be decided by the student and the dissertation chair. Some students prefer to write proposals using standard formats that they are likely to use later in their career, e.g., NIH format, or that will help them facilitate upcoming fellowship applications or IRB applications. Whatever format is used, the dissertation proposal should be succinct.

2. **Submission of the dissertation proposal and scheduling the proposal hearing.**

   The dissertation proposal is reviewed at a formal hearing that includes the student, the student's dissertation chair, the second SSA faculty committee member, the external faculty member, and two reactors assigned by the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies. Potential reactors may be suggested to the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies, but are chosen by the Chair of
the Committee on Doctoral Studies based on considerations that include faculty substantive expertise, time commitments, and workloads. Reactors also must have a doctorate and be members of SSA’s faculty. It is not appropriate for students to approach faculty members to ask them to be reactors.

A hearing is scheduled by the Student Affairs Specialist in the Office of the Dean of Students. Hearings should not be scheduled until all members of the dissertation committee have read a complete draft of the proposal and agree that it is appropriate to have a hearing.

To begin the process of scheduling a hearing, the student submits a Proposal Submission form to the Student Affairs Specialist. This form should specify the title of the proposal and the names of the committee members. The form must be signed by the chair of the dissertation committee. There is a place on this form where the names of possible reactors can be provided.

The Dean of Students then reviews the student’s record and determines whether all requirements for admission to candidacy have been met. Before a hearing can be scheduled, the student must have completed all their course requirements, attended the doctoral workshops for six quarters, passed the qualifying examination, and submitted the pre-dissertation research project.

If these requirements have all been met, the Student Affairs Specialist will ask the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies to select reactors and will then schedule the hearing. Given the difficulty of coordinating faculty schedules, students should initiate the process of scheduling a hearing at least six weeks before they hope the hearing will be held. Hearings can be scheduled at any time during the year, not only during the three academic quarters.

It is the responsibility of the student to submit electronic copies of the proposal to all committee members, reactors, the Dean of Students, and the Student Affairs Specialist no later then two weeks before the scheduled hearing. It is also the responsibility of the student to determine if a faculty member would prefer a hard copy and to make it available. If the electronic copy of the dissertation is not distributed two weeks before the hearing, the hearing will be cancelled by the Office of the Dean of Students and not rescheduled until the following quarter.

5. **Proposal Hearing.** The Student Affairs Specialist will make arrangements for a hearing room and, if necessary, for a conference phone or SKYPE connection. The Student Affairs Specialist will send out a reminder email to participants before the hearing.

It is expected that the student, all three members of the committee, and both reactors will be present at the hearing. Committee members not located in Chicago may participate by speaker phone or SKYPE. If at the last minute a committee member is unable to attend either in person or remotely, it is up to
the student to notify the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral studies who will determine if the hearing needs to be rescheduled or can proceed.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the student’s dissertation committee to lead the hearing, including orienting the external faculty member to SSA procedures and expectations. Typically hearings begin with a brief closed door discussion where the student is asked to step out of the room so that the committee can plan the discussion. The proposal hearing is not a test of the student’s knowledge. The proposal hearing is considered a “working meeting” where the faculty is encouraged to raise issues for further consideration and to suggest refinements to the study design. Students are also expected to use the meeting as an opportunity to get input by faculty.

At the end of the hearing, the student’s dissertation committee and reactors may accept the dissertation proposal as is, reject it outright, or require minor or major changes in the proposal. If the proposal is not accepted as is, the committee and reactors decide the manner of subsequent approval (e.g., another meeting, individual committee member review and approval, a revised proposal document, a memo amending the proposal).

If the proposal is not approved as is, it is the responsibility of the Chair of the committee to document in writing at the end of the meeting the changes that are needed and the form in which those changes should be made (e.g. revised proposal, memo to the committee). This document should be submitted to the Dean of Students Office and shared with the student and other committee members.

A proposal can be approved by a unanimous vote or with only one dissenting vote among the five. If three members of the panel vote to approve and two to disapprove, the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies will review the decision.

The student’s Dissertation Chair completes the proposal review process by submitting a Report of Dissertation Proposal Hearing to the Dean of Students. Unusual problems identified during the hearing should be brought to the attention of the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies.

The dissertation is a critical point in a student's career. Since the approval of dissertations is formally the responsibility of the faculty, the committee’s task is to determine whether the research proposal is feasible and can be carried out in a manner that will be satisfactory to the scholarly community. It is in the student's interest that work not be undertaken that either cannot be completed or that would result in an inferior piece of work.

6. **Admission to candidacy.** Admission to candidacy occurs when all degree requirements have been met (courses, workshops, qualifying exam, pre-
dissertation research project) and the student has an approved dissertation proposal. When a dissertation proposal and any amendments have been approved by the Committee, a form signed by the dissertation chair, the Dean of Students, and the Dean of the School is submitted to the Office of the University Registrar indicating that the study should be admitted to candidacy. After that point students may identify themselves as doctoral candidate and apply for fellowships that require admission to candidacy.

7. **IRB Approval:** In accordance with Federal regulations governing human subject research, the University of Chicago requires that all research protocols be approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the research is initiated. This includes projects involving secondary data. The IRB ensures that safeguards are in place to protect the rights and welfare of the human subjects. SSA has its own IRB that reviews all human subject research conducted by faculty and student investigators. It is strongly recommended that doctoral students meet with the IRB Director before the proposal hearing to begin the preparation of the protocol submission. IRB protocols are prepared through an online website: [aura.uchicago.edu](http://aura.uchicago.edu). Students should work with their chair to prepare the protocol; the protocol will need to be submitted to the IRB with the faculty member named as the investigator.

**XII. Completing the Dissertation and Applying for the Degree**

**Dissertation Research and Writing**

It is the responsibility of the student to work with his/her dissertation committee at all stages of the dissertation process. It is the student’s responsibility and to the student’s benefit to keep all members of the committee informed about dissertation progress. It is strongly recommended that a year after the proposal hearing, that the student and the committee meet for an update on the student’s progress. The Student Affairs Specialist can help the student with scheduling an update meeting.

The Chair of the student’s Dissertation Committee will ordinarily assume the major responsibility for dissertation advising, although in many cases committee members will share somewhat equally the responsibility for advising the student in the dissertation process.

The Chair has the following duties:

a) **Serving as academic advisor to the student.** The Chair of the student's dissertation committee serves as academic advisor to the student from the time of appointment. The Chair advises on whether additional courses or workshops, whether the student should be gaining other research experiences, what types of teaching experience would be most beneficial to the student,
potential funding sources and on other matters. The Chair is responsible for conducting the annual advising review with the student.

b) Seeing that the student obtains approval from agencies whose materials will be used in the study

c) Seeing that the student understands and adheres to ethical standards of research, including obtaining appropriate human subjects’ clearance from the School's Institutional Review Board.

d) Helping the student identify funding sources for the dissertation study and to mentor the student in grant proposal preparation.

e) Working with the student on the dissertation. The Chair will assume primary responsibility for working with the student during the execution of the study and will help make full use of the contributions of the other committee members and faculty. Normally the student and Chair arrange a schedule of regular meetings while the student is working on the dissertation. Depending on the nature of the dissertation and the stage of the project, these meetings should be at a minimum of once a quarter, and may be as often as weekly, especially during the data analysis and writing phases. It is often helpful for the student to meet jointly with the chair and other members of the committee.

f) Reviewing student writing. The Chair is responsible for providing the student detailed and timely feedback on their dissertation chapter drafts. Students and faculty need to jointly plan a writing timeline. Students and faculty should agree to deadlines for submitting chapters or other portions of the project. Students should not assume that faculty will always be available to review their material. When students meet agreed deadlines, faculty should provide prompt and specific feedback on the writing. That feedback is usually best conveyed through a combination of margin notes and discussion during in-person meetings.

g) Planning for review and acceptance of final draft. The Chair will suggest to the student when it is appropriate for other committee members to read portions of the dissertation. In most cases the Chair will ask the student to rework first-draft material before submitting it to other committee members. Other committee members should have a chance to read and give feedback on the writing before it is in nearly final form. Before a hearing is scheduled, the chair will poll the other committee members as to whether a draft is ready for a final hearing. The committee as a whole, not the student or the Chair, must determine readiness to defend the dissertation. If there is a difference of opinion among the committee members as to whether the dissertation is ready for a final hearing, the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral studies may be asked to help resolve the difference of opinion.
Writing the Dissertation

a) General structure of the dissertation. Because dissertations vary greatly in their methods and disciplinary orientation, students, in conjunction with their committee should select a style that works for their project. Traditional dissertations include chapters formatted much like a book manuscript, with a table of contents, introductory chapter(s) addressing literature, a methods chapter, one or more results chapter, and a discussion chapter, and reference list. Some departments offer students a multi-paper or three paper dissertation option. At SSA, that is not a formal option, but some students prefer to format their dissertations so that chapters within it are written as stand-alone, but conceptually linked, articles, each chapter including an introduction, methods, results, and discussion. This format is acceptable so long as it is approved by the committee and so long as the dissertation also includes a brief orienting chapter and a brief discussion chapter at the end. Three separate papers is often viewed as the appropriate number for a multi-paper dissertation, but it is up to the student and committee to decide on the suitable number of papers for the particular project. In no cases should those paper chapters be articles that have already been published or submitted for publication. Before writing the dissertation, students should study the formatting requirements of the Office of Academic. The University Format and Guidelines for the Dissertation are available online at http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/phd/.

b) Writing support. Scholars work to improve their writing throughout their careers. Students writing a dissertation may receive some technical support with writing from the members of their dissertation committee – but that is not the primary role of committee members.

It is strongly recommended that when writing dissertations students consult resources that inspire them to achieve good writing and provide them with technical writing help. Standard print resources include Strunk and White Elements of Style, Turabian A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, The Chicago Manual of Style. There are many online writing resources as well, such as Grammar Girl (http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com) and the Subversive Copy Editor (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/CMS_FAQ/new/new_questions01.html)

All doctoral students are strongly encouraged to take a course through the nationally renowned University of Chicago Academic Writing Program (“The Little Red Schoolhouse”) (http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/courses/grad.htm). It is most helpful to take this course when you are actively writing a dissertation proposal, a manuscript for publication, or dissertation. The course is designed not just for students who may struggle with writing, but for all scholars who are motivated to improve their writing. Please note that this course does not count toward the PhD course requirements; students wishing to enroll in this course do so at their own expense.
Doctoral students are also encouraged to utilize the dissertation support resources of the University Office of Graduate Student Affairs. These supports include dissertation research grants, and dissertation “write-ins”. For more information visit: [http://grad.uchicago.edu/training_support/](http://grad.uchicago.edu/training_support/) [new link: http://grad.uchicago.edu/communication/writing-skills](http://grad.uchicago.edu/communication/writing-skills)

If doctoral students need additional support with writing, such as individual tutoring or editing support, they should confer with the Dean of Students about their needs and the availability of resources.

**Dissertation Work in Absentia**

Some work on the dissertation may be done in absentia. However, the following should be accomplished while the student is in residence:

a) A dissertation committee appointed;

b) The dissertation proposal and plan for data collection and analysis accepted by the committee at a proposal hearing;

c) A plan for correspondence and consultation with the dissertation committee established.

**Changes in Members of the Dissertation Committee**

On occasion, it is necessary or desirable for there to be a change to the composition of the dissertation committee between the proposal hearing and the final defense. Students must have changes in the committee approved by the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies. Such changes normally would be requested well in advance of final dissertation hearings.

The most common reason for changing committee membership is an academic departure where a faculty member who was on the committee at the time of the proposal hearing has retired or taken a position at another institution. In such cases students will need to reconstitute the membership of their committee. At the time of the final defense, committee chairs must be members of the SSA faculty. SSA faculty who have retired or moved to other institutions may not continue to chair a committee, although may remain as internal members of the committed for up to one year after their departure. After a year SSA faculty who have taken positions at another institution may remain on the committee in the role of an external member. Committees may include more than three members at the discretion of the student.

Students may also request changes in committee membership because of the arrival of new professors on the faculty whose research interests closely align with their project or because of changes to the dissertation study that require a different type of faculty expertise. In rare occasions students may request a change in the committee because of problems they have working with a particular faculty member. Such
changes will be allowed in consultation with the Chair of the Doctoral Committee and the Dean of Students.

**Application for Degree**

Doctoral students may finish their work so as to graduate during any of the four University convocations (autumn, winter, spring, summer). In the quarter the student hopes to graduate, an application for a degree should be made online through the student’s MyUChicago account no later than the first week (Friday) of the quarter. Tuition will need to be paid during the quarter of graduation, even if it is the summer. Consult the Dean of Students regarding financial assistance if the quarter of graduation is summer.

**Time Elapsed after Admission to Candidacy**

University rules require that eight months must elapse between Admission to Candidacy and the award of the degree.

**Final Dissertation Defense**

The final oral defense of the dissertation should be conducted when the dissertation is complete and ready for presentation as meeting the academic standards of the School (even though further substantive and formatting revisions may be made). The Chair of the student’s dissertation committee, in consultation with other committee members, makes the decision that a dissertation is ready for the final examination. The hearing should not be scheduled until all members of the committee have had the opportunity to read drafts of all sections of the dissertation. The final dissertation hearing is not a working meeting. It should not be scheduled until the student has a completed document to present.

The purposes of the hearing are to provide the candidate an opportunity to explain the dissertation project results and their contribution to the literature, and to answer committee questions about the project methods, findings, and implications for current policy and practice issues. The hearing also provides an occasion for discussing plans for publication and new avenues for investigation.

Five faculty members ordinarily take major responsibility for the oral examination – the three members of the dissertation committee and two reactors. The two reactors are suggested by the chair of the dissertation committee and formally appointed by the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies. The reactors are not necessarily the same individuals who served as reactors for the proposal hearing.

To request an oral hearing for the dissertation, students must complete the Dissertation Submission form and submit to the Student Affairs Specialist in the Office of the Dean of Students approximately six weeks before the time when the hearing needs to occur, allowing sufficient time for revisions after the hearing. The Dissertation Packet including all forms is available from the Student Affairs
Specialist in the Office of the Dean of Students. The final oral examination will be scheduled by the Student Affairs Specialist in the Office of the Dean of Students.

At least two weeks before the hearing, it is the responsibility of the student to submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to all committee members and reactors and to the Dean of Students and the Student Affairs Specialist. It is also the responsibility of the student to determine whether any of the faculty prefer to receive a hard copy of the dissertation. If the dissertation is not submitted by the deadline, the hearing will be cancelled and not rescheduled until the following quarter.

After the dissertation document has been submitted, the Dean of Students will announce the time of the hearing to SSA faculty and doctoral students via email. The email will include a copy of the dissertation abstract.

The hearing is chaired by the dissertation chair and is generally attended by only the student and relevant faculty. However, other faculty may attend at their choice. Other doctoral students may attend as observers if they have received the permission of the candidate and the Chair in advance. It is generally inappropriate for family members to attend.

Like a proposal hearing, a dissertation hearing usually begins with a brief closed session during which the candidate and observers are absent from the room. Then the candidate presents a brief overview of the project to the committee and reactors. The faculty questions the student about the project and its relation to academic literature and applies concerns. These questions may be about theory, methods, or the relevance of the research to the broader social welfare and social work field.

At the end of the hearing, again with the candidate absent from the room, the dissertation committee and reactors may accept the dissertation as is, reject it outright, or require minor or major changes in the proposal. If the dissertation is not accepted as is, the committee and reactors decide the manner of subsequent approval (e.g., another meeting, individual committee member review and approval). A dissertation can be approved by a unanimous vote or with only one dissenting vote. If three members of the panel vote to approve and two to disapprove, the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies will review the decision. If changes are requested, they should be documented by the chair in writing and provided to the Dean of Students office.

**Technical Requirements for Dissertation Submission**

Once the committee has approved the dissertation, the document needs to be submitted to the dissertation office. Deadlines and requirements are available online: [http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/phd/](http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/phd/) and the Dissertation Office can be contacted through e-mail: phd@lib.uchicago.edu. Dissertations must comply with the guidelines set forth by Proquest UMI and the University of Chicago Dissertation Office which is located at the Joseph Regenstein Library, Room 100-B, 1100 E. 57th Street, (773) 702-7404, Fax: (773) 702-6623.
Formatting. The dissertation must be typed according to a format approved by the Dissertation Office. See https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/documents/788/booklet2011_kD4xffx.pdf

It is recommended that students familiarize themselves with these requirements early in the dissertation writing process, to avoid the need to reformat close to the time of submission. The University allows students to select bibliographic styles consistent with their discipline, e.g., APA style, University of Chicago Style, but has strict guidelines with respect to font, margins, and other issues. Students may make an appointment with the Dissertation Office to look at representative sections, or the whole manuscript, for formatting compliance. This service is on a first-come, first-serve basis, so it is in your interest to leave enough time for this process. A student may make independent arrangements for a typist if he/she desires to do so, but at the student's own risk. The student is responsible for detailed planning with the typist and for final proofreading. The format of the completed document must be checked and approved by the Dissertation Office and a dissertation that does not meet standards may delay graduation.

Use of copyrighted material. Whenever the dissertation includes previously copyrighted material beyond “fair use,” written permission must be provided by the copyright holder. Generally copyrighted instruments authored by others should not be included in appendices of the dissertation without their permission.

SSA approval. The Office of the Dean of the School prepares an approval form to be sent to the Dissertation Office after the dissertation has been approved at the final oral examination. This is submitted by the Student Affairs Specialist.

Submittal date. The final dissertation approved by the Committee must be submitted by a date set by the Dissertation Office of the University. This date is usually four weeks before the Convocation in the quarter in which the student expects to receive the degree, but the student should verify the date. The Dissertation Office publishes the Deadlines for Submitting Completed & Approved Ph.D. Dissertations that is available on-line http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/phd/. New link: https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/research/scholar/phd/students/dissertation-deadlines/

Electronic Submission. Dissertations are submitted electronically by the student to the ProQuest UMI website. A fee is paid for submission. The University of Chicago Dissertation office will audit the dissertation for formatting and technical requirements after online submission. The student will also need to execute a publication agreement with ProQuest UMI. This is a requirement for graduation. Additionally, the Office of the Dean of Students will make arrangements to have a bound copy of the dissertation available in the SSA Library.

https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/research/scholar/phd/students/publication-decisions/
XIII. Time Guidelines for Completion of the Degree

First Two Years of Study

It is expected that during the first two years of study students will complete their required coursework, work as a research assistant with one or more faculty members, complete a pre-dissertation research project, develop preliminary ideas for a dissertation, and have identified faculty who can provide mentorship for that dissertation. By the spring of their second year students will need to submit to the faculty a brief document describing preliminary dissertation ideas. Students will take the qualifying examination in September before the third year begins.

Third Year of Study

It is expected that in the third year students will attend the dissertation proposal seminar, work with their advisor to develop a dissertation proposal, and schedule a hearing for the review of that proposal. When all course requirements have been completed, the pre-dissertation research proposal has been submitted, and the proposal has been successfully defended, students are formally admitted to candidacy.

Students receiving SSA funding will serve as a teaching assistant during the third year. Most students will continue their collaborative research with one or more faculty members. Some students will continue to take courses during the third year, particularly research methods courses relevant to the dissertation study. A small number of students may need to retake part of the qualifying examination and devote study or course time to prepare for that.

Fourth and Fifth Year of Study

Students in their fourth years and begun usually are devoting their efforts to completing their dissertation projects, publishing from other research projects, presenting their work at conferences, and preparing for the academic job market.

Students in their fourth and fifth years are also expected to serve as a teaching assistant for at least one course each year. Some students will have the opportunity to teach their own courses.

AM/PhD Students

AM/PhD students generally spend most of their first year working on requirements for the master’s degree. They typically will need an extra year to meet the Ph.D. program goals outlined above.
XIV. Satisfactory Academic Progress and Deadlines that Have Consequences

General University Guidelines Regarding Registration and Grading

In order to be compliant with federal financial aid regulations, all full-time students must be enrolled quarterly in course work and must maintain satisfactory academic progress in their program of study.

Effective Winter Quarter 2012, all doctoral students who register for fewer than 300 units (typically 3 courses) will be enrolled automatically in an "Advanced Studies" course, which will carry up to 300 units. All students enrolled in this course must receive a grade for the course for every quarter and the grade will be recorded by the Chair of Doctoral Studies. The grade to be assigned to this course will either be a grade of "satisfactory" (S) or "unsatisfactory" (U). A grade of "U" is to be entered in a particular quarter if a student's faculty advisor communicates to the Chair of Doctoral Studies that the student is not making satisfactory progress or if a student has not met specific academic requirements set by an area or the academic advisor.

In general, students are making satisfactory academic progress when they have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 and have at least one passing grade entered per quarter enrolled.

Students who receive a grade of I (Incomplete) or NGR (No Grade Recorded) must complete coursework with a grade entered before the start of the next autumn quarter.

For more information about the federal aid regulations and satisfactory academic progress, please see the Student Loan Administration's policy at: https://sla.uchicago.edu/page/maintaining-eligibility.

Faculty Review of Student Progress and Accomplishments

Satisfactory academic progress in a doctoral program is not a simple matter of having satisfactory grades and meeting requirements. It also requires a full engagement with the enterprise of scholarship and demonstration of potential to conduct independent scholarship. Each spring doctoral students and their advisors participate in an advising review process. The Committee on Doctoral Studies reviews the progress of each student, examining whether students are doing high quality work, are completing program benchmarks, show promise for successful completion of the doctoral program, and need additional supports from the program in order to successfully complete their studies.

Program Deadlines for Completing Dissertation Proposals
Students are expected to have defended their dissertation proposal before the beginning of their fourth year in the program. SSA financial aid will not be distributed to students if they have missed this deadline. Students who have not scheduled a hearing by the end of the summer before their fourth year need to submit a petition to the Committee on Doctoral studies by September 1, explaining their progress on the proposal, the reason an extension is required, and a time line for completing the proposal. A draft of the dissertation proposal should be attached. Students should also request that letters of support (email is fine) be submitted by their two SSA dissertation committee members and the instructor of the dissertation seminar directly to the Doctoral Committee.

Students who by the end of their fifth year in the program do not have an approved proposal, will be withdrawn from the program, unless they submit a petition to the Committee on Doctoral studies requesting permission to remain in the program. That petition should provide a strong and convincing rationale that the student has the potential to complete a dissertation. The petition should be accompanied by letters of support from the student’s two SSA dissertation committee members.

AM/PhD students, under all of these guidelines have an extra year to complete their proposals.

**Program Deadlines for Completing Degree**

SSA guidelines are that the student must have completed all requirements for the Ph.D. by the end of the quarter five years after the quarter in which he or she was admitted to candidacy. In order to continue in the program longer, the student must petition for resumption of studies to the Committee on Doctoral Studies. This petition must include a letter of support from the student’s dissertation chair. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Doctoral Studies to specify the conditions for resumption of studies in each situation. Typically, extensions will only be granted to students who can document their active involvement in their dissertation research and who have a clear plan for completing the program.

SSA PhD and AM/PhD students must complete their degrees by summer quarter at the end of their tenth year in the program. Students will be administratively withdrawn from the program at that time. There is no opportunity to appeal this deadline.

Once withdrawn from the program, individuals will not be charged tuition. They will no longer receive university privileges such as health insurance and access to library materials. Student loans may require repayment.

Individuals may, however, continue to work toward completion of the dissertation after administrative withdraw. When the dissertation is complete, the individual may request permission to defend the dissertation. That request should be initiated through the Office of the Dean of Students. The request will be reviewed by the Committee on Doctoral Studies. If the request is approved, the administratively
withdrawn student will complete an application for degree and submit it to the University Registrar’s office along with a graduation payment which equals the cost of “pro forma” tuition, (approximately $300). Procedures for scheduling the hearing are the same as outlined in section XII. Above.

XV. General Appeal Procedures for Students

Students who wish to appeal an adverse academic decision, may request the Chair of the Committee on Doctoral Studies or the Dean of Students to undertake consideration of their situation. In this event, the Chair or the Dean of Students has the option to: (1) undertake informal means of study and resolution of the situation in conjunction with the student, his/her faculty advisor or dissertation committee chairperson, and other relevant faculty; (2) appoint a small subcommittee, usually numbering three, from the faculty to study and/or resolve the situation; and (3) devise other appropriate and/or necessary means for study and resolution.

In exceptional cases, a student may request the Dean of the School to review the circumstances and make a final resolution.

The ten-year for degree completion cannot be appealed.
2015-2016

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September 16, 2015
Always consult the doctoral program CHALK site for the most up-to-date version of this handbook.