



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



The University of Michigan School of Social Work Commencement Guide



Overview

The University of Michigan School of Social Work Commencement Guide provides essential information and guidance for graduating students and guests attending the commencement ceremonies. This comprehensive document covers various aspects, including the general timeline of events, venue details, speaker selections, and attire information. ***Graduates will receive detailed information and instructions for their specific graduation ceremony during their last term in the program.***

Commencement Ceremonies

- Three School of Social Work ceremonies are held each year: Winter (December), Spring (May), and Summer (August). Both on-campus and online graduates are eligible to attend these ceremonies.
 - Receptions are held after all ceremonies, allowing graduates and guests to eat and socialize.
- The graduation application is based on the semester, rather than the season. The semesters are Fall, Winter, and Summer, respectively.
- The University of Michigan holds two ceremonies: Spring (April/May) and Winter (December).
 - MSW graduates may attend the University of Michigan-wide commencement ceremony in addition to/instead of the School of Social Work commencement. Information on attending the main ceremony can be found at <https://commencement.umich.edu/>
- MSW Graduates may be able to attend an early/belated School of Social Work commencement ceremony if they are not able to attend the ceremony in their original timeframe (at the end of their final term). Reach out to ssw.graduation@umich.edu to inquire about options.

Commencement Dates

- School of Social Work commencement dates are listed at: <https://ssw.umich.edu/commencement/calendar>. If students are curious about a date this is not published, they can email ssw.graduation@umich.edu to request more information.
- Commencement dates are chosen based upon availability of Hill Auditorium and The Power Center more than a year in advance of commencement.

Venues

- The School of Social Work typically utilizes Hill Auditorium and The Power Center for the Performing Arts for its commencement ceremonies. **Venues are set by the University more than a year in advance of the ceremony date based upon space availability and the size of our group.**
- Venue guidelines prohibit graduates or guests from bringing food, beverages, and certain other items into the auditorium. We ask that you plan accordingly. The following items are prohibited from graduate ceremonies at Hill Auditorium and The Power Center:
 - All bags (including purses, clear bags, fanny packs, etc.)
 - All bottles (including all types of water bottles)
 - Alcoholic beverages
 - Aerosol and spray cans
 - Animals (except service animals for persons with a disability)
 - Apparel or signage displaying profane or abusive language
 - Containers of any kind (including coolers, thermoses, cups, cans, flasks)
 - Flags and flagpoles

- Food of any kind
- Irritants
- Noisemakers (including but not limited to whistles, air horns, boom boxes, bull horns, kazoos, sirens, thunder sticks, etc.)
- Projectiles (including footballs, Frisbees and beach balls)
- Seat cushions containing any type of metal or those with pockets, storage slots, seat backs, arm rests, or attachments
- Strollers
- Video camera, tripods and selfie sticks
- Umbrellas
- Weapons
- Any other item that may obstruct or impair the view or enjoyment of another attendee

Tickets/Guest Registration

- We require graduates to register their guests that plan to attend in person. The registration confirmation serves as a **required** ticket for entry into the auditorium. Graduates receive details on guest registration a few months prior to the ceremony, which includes the number of guests that a graduate may register. We hope to accept requests from graduates for additional tickets and will assess space available after the deadline for guest registration to ensure that all graduates have the opportunity to register their guests. **There is no cost for guest registration.**

Graduates Participating Remotely

- Graduates will be asked to complete a form to indicate whether they plan to attend the SSW Commencement ceremony in person, will attend remotely and would like their name read & picture shown, or if they do not plan to participate in commencement. Graduates indicating that they plan to attend remotely will have a slide created with their name and photo, which will be shown during commencement and via the livestream, as their name is read during the presentation of graduates. We cannot guarantee a slide will be included for students who do not inform us of their plan to attend SSW Commencement remotely by the deadline.
- We will request an updated mailing address from graduates who are not attending commencement or who are attending remotely so we can mail commencement materials (including the social justice service cord provided to all graduates).

Travel

- Parking and driving directions: <https://campusinfo.umich.edu/campusmap>
 - Day-of parking information varies ceremony to ceremony and will be emailed to graduates ahead of time.
- Check the [Ann Arbor Visitors' Bureau website](#) for hotel information.
 - It is advisable to make reservations as early as possible, particularly for the Spring (April/May) and Winter (December) commencements.

International Graduates

- The University of Michigan will provide a letter of invitation to assist graduates whose parents are applying for a visa in order to attend the commencement ceremony. To obtain a letter follow these steps:
 - Prior to submitting a request for a letter of invitation, the graduating student should apply for graduation via Wolverine Access.
 - Visit the [International Center website](#) for an overview of documents needed to apply for a visa.
 - After successfully applying for graduation and visiting the International Center website, please request the letter(s) of invitation by completing the [online request form](#).
 - The letter from the University is mailed to the graduate, who can then forward it to the parents for use in documenting their visa request. Please allow four weeks to receive the letter.

Attire

- All degree candidates who participate in Commencement must wear academic attire.
 - Graduation attire consists of a Master's gown, Masters hood, cap & tassel. The Master's gown has a different sleeve style than the bachelor's gown. The hood is an academic cowl worn by master and doctoral graduates. The cap is a standard black mortarboard cap.
 - The colors of the hood & tassel differ based on the college/school within the University. The tassel color for social work is citron.
 - The School of Social Work provides all students social justice service cords to honor the service each student completes. Individual pathways do not have distinct individual cords. Some specialty scholar programs may distribute cords on an individual basis apart from the SSW-provided cords.
 - *The SSW also does not give specific recognitions for GPA including magna cum laude or summa cum laude.*
- The Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management has a limited number of masters caps, gowns and hoods that have been donated by previous graduates for students to borrow. Once the availability date is announced, graduates may stop by the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management, Room 1748 SSWB, to borrow attire on a first-come first-served basis. Students will need to be present to try on attire as it is height specific.
 - Students will need to purchase their own tassel, as we do not have these available to borrow.
 - Social Work hood and tassel color: "Citron."
 - **Any concerns about acquiring attire can be sent to ssw.graduation@umich.edu.**
- If preferred, students may purchase their own attire for approximately \$80 for a complete set. Items may also be purchased separately. *Be sure to ask for the "Social Work" hood and tassel.*
 - Attire is generally available for purchase in person or by order at the following locations:
 - **Michigan Union Barnes & Noble** – 530 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109
 - **Pierpont Commons Barnes & Noble** – 2101 Bonisteel Blvd., Ann Arbor, MI 48109
 - **Herff Jones**– Purchasing information is sent out on a ceremony-by-ceremony basis.

Accessibility

- The University of Michigan School of Social Work strives to ensure that all graduates and guests can participate fully in commencement. **Any questions about accessibility or special accommodations can be sent to ssw.graduation@umich.edu.**
- Hill Auditorium and The Power Center have ample accessible seating for students and guests.
- Real-time captioning and a sign language interpreter will be present during the ceremony.
- The School of Social Work Commencement will be live streamed at ssw.umich.edu for individuals who do not plan to attend the ceremony in person. Captioning will be available.
- More in-depth accessibility information is sent for each ceremony for graduates and their guests.

Graduation Committee

- The SSW Graduation Committee is responsible for assisting in planning and reviewing and creating policies related to Commencement ceremonies consistent with the mission and values of the School of Social Work. The work of the Graduation Committee will be carried out with active representation and input from faculty, staff and student members.
- Keynote and student speakers, as well as faculty roles, are ultimately decided on by the Graduation Committee in conjunction with the Dean of the School of Social Work and the Executive Committee.
- Keynote Speaker Selection Process
 - The Graduation Committee will periodically email out calls for commencement keynote speaker recommendations to students, faculty, and staff.

- Members of our community are welcome to suggest both people they personally have a connection to, as well as people they feel would fit the values of the School of Social Work.
- The Committee looks for speakers with the following attributes:
 - Successful career or extensive knowledge of the field of social work
 - Connection to the State of Michigan or knowledge of social justice issues relevant to the State of Michigan
 - Ability to deliver an inspiring message to the graduating class.
 - Excellent public speaking skills
- The Graduation Committee will compile the suggestions and make a recommendation to the Dean and Executive Committee on who to invite to speak.
- Student Speaker Selection Process
 - Each semester an email call for student speaker/performer nominations will go out. Students will need to receive one nomination in order to be considered. Self-nominations are accepted. Nominations should include a description of why the nominee(s) would be a good student speaker or performer for the School of Social Work Commencement.
 - The nominee must be a current student who plans to complete their MSW degree requirements by the end of the term corresponding to the ceremony for which they are nominated. They must be in good academic standing and have strong public speaking (speaker) or performance abilities (performer).
 - Once the nomination is accepted, the student will be invited to submit their speech or performance to the Graduation Committee for their review.
 - Previous performances have included songs, poems, or a dialogue back-and-forth between the performers.
 - The general submission guideline for speeches is a typed speech (4-5 minutes in length) that reflects the occasion and academic experiences unique to the SSW, and provides an inspiring message to the graduating class and audience members.
 - The general submission guideline for performances is that all performances must be submitted in "final" form; This is to say that what you submit to the Graduation Committee must be fully representative of what would be performed on stage, to allow for accurate and informed consideration by the Committee.
 - A short (1-2 paragraphs) submission about the performance and how it aligns with the selection criteria is also required.
 - The Graduation Committee will evaluate all submissions (identifying information is removed as much as possible) and vote on which speeches/performances will be delivered.
 - Once selections have been made and approved, and the students accept, the Graduation Committee Chair will work with the student(s) to edit and improve their speeches/performances for clarity, flow, time, etc.
- Faculty role selections
 - Graduates are emailed a survey asking them to nominate faculty members to participate in commencement for the roles of MSW hooders, name readers, and ceremony marshals.
 - Once the survey closes, the results are presented to the Graduation Committee, who make the final determination on roles and invite the chosen faculty to participate in the ceremony.

Photos

- A photographer will be available to take individual pictures as graduates cross the stage at the SSW ceremony.
- A 'Commencement Name Card & Graduation Foto Information' card will be available for each graduate when they arrive in the Hill Auditorium graduate robing area. The QR code for photos will be on the back side of the name card. Graduates will need to use the photographer QR code to electronically fill

out their information so the photographer can identify, contact, and send graduates the proofs for possible purchase.

- Photo instructions will be emailed to graduates prior to commencement. *There is no obligation to purchase the pictures.*

Diplomas

- The University provides a free standard size (8 ½" x 11") diploma to each MSW graduate. The diploma is mailed to the graduate's permanent address or one specified on the diploma application which the graduate completes through Wolverine Access.
- Diplomas **are not prepared** by the University of Michigan Records/Diploma Department and a guaranteed delivery schedule is not possible. Diplomas will be mailed by the University Registrar's Office within four months of graduation.
 - Diploma covers are not provided to students.
 - For more information on diplomas, check out the University Registrar's Web site: <https://ro.umich.edu/graduation/diplomas>

Computer Services

- Graduating students will no longer be able to use some U-M computing services after they officially graduate (approx. 4-6 weeks aft the term ends). **It is important to review details at <https://its.umich.edu/accounts-access/leaving/graduating-students>**. All U-M alumni may use email forwarding at no charge for as long as they choose. Alumni also will maintain the use of their Google Apps UMICH email and calendar.

NASW Membership

- Consider joining NASW and take advantage of the student discount. Social work is complex, and resources for clients can be limited. When social workers unite by joining NASW, the social work profession has a larger voice and more influence with elected leaders, policy makers, and employers to make critical changes that support the profession and society.
- Social workers join NASW to advance in their careers, connect with colleagues, and protect their practice — all while advocating for the profession and important social issues. NASW members enjoy certain benefits and networking opportunities.
- **Joining before graduation allows students to qualify for 3 years of discounted membership dues:**
 - BSW and MSW student members who maintain continuous membership after graduation qualify for a transitional period with discounted membership dues. Eligible NASW transitional members may apply for discounted professional liability insurance for the first two years of professional practice.
 - **MSW students are eligible for three years of transitional membership**, with dues of \$116 in years one and two, and dues of \$179 in year three.
- Learn more about NASW membership at <https://www.socialworkers.org/Membership>

Loan Repayment/Public Service Loan Forgiveness Info

- Student borrowers in federal loan programs are required to complete online [Exit Counseling](#) when they graduate, leave school or drop below half-time enrollment. Students may also be eligible for the [Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program](#). Contact Cerise Carrington, Assistant Director of Financial Aid (cmcar@umich.edu) with questions regarding loan repayment and loan forgiveness information.

Career Services

- The School of Social Work's Career Center, 1696 School Social Work Building, assists students and alumni with their job search process, resume/cover letter reviews and social work licensure questions. Licensure test preparation software is available to help students and alumni study for licensure exams.

Please call (734) 763-6259 or email ssw-cso@umich.edu to schedule an appointment. Join us on [LinkedIn](#).

- The University Career Center, 3200 Student Activities Bldg., offers services and resources to aid in the career exploration and job search process for UM students in every academic discipline. Their work often involves collaboration with academic units, employers and alumni/ae. Graduate students are encouraged to take advantage of every resource offered by The Career Center. Their Reference Letter Center can help graduates manage reference letters, whether they are used for job applications, admission for advanced education or other purposes. Check out their website at: careercenter.umich.edu.

Michigan Online For Alumni

Even if you're graduating you can always keep learning with Michigan Online!

Michigan Online offers over 280 courses and series to university alumni - regardless of when you graduated. Created by world-renowned faculty and staff at the university, these courses and series help further your education, advance your career, and dive deeper into professional development. To begin accessing courses, log in to online.umich.edu using your U-M username and password. Once you've logged in, you can get started right away by exploring courses in the dropdown menu at the top of the site.

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