

TSU-MSW Program

Policies

TSU-MSW PROGRAM POLICIES

**Policy 1.1 - Credit for Life, Volunteer, or Employment Experience**

Academic or field education credit shall not be granted by the TSU-MSW Program for life, volunteer, or employment experience.

**Policy 1.2 - Advanced Standing**

Advanced Standing is defined as the awarding of academic credit toward a MSW degree for prior baccalaureate course and field work completed at an undergraduate social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).\*

Persons who enter the TSU-MSW Program with a degree granted by a CSWE-accredited undergraduate social work program\* and who have a cumulative GPA of 2.75 are eligible for advanced standing. Individuals granted advanced standing upon admission to this program will be given credit for foundation course and field work and will have the requirements for the MSW degree reduced by 30 credits; advanced standing students will complete this program's concentration curriculum only.

For the purposes of granting Advanced Standing credit under this paragraph, an accredited undergraduate social work program is one that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education as posted in the Council's Directory of Colleges and Universities with Accredited Social Work Degree Programs. International students who hold a baccalaureate or masters degree in social work from a program that is not accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and who are interested in obtaining advanced standing credit must submit their transcript to the Council for a determination of equivalency.

**Policy 1.3 – Graduate Transfer Credit**

Transfer Credit is defined as the awarding of academic credit toward a degree for post­

baccalaureate course or field work completed at an accredited academic institution when such work meets the transfer credit requirements of the university and MSW Program.

Applicants who have successfully completed graduate coursework at an accredited college or

university in social work may be able to transfer up to twelve (12) credits of coursework. Applicants who have successfully completed graduate coursework at an accredited college or

university in a discipline other than social work may be able to transfer up to twelve (12) credits of coursework. Once accepted, students should discuss transfer credit opportunities with their advisor and/or the MSW Coordinator.

**Policy 1.4 - Enrollment Status**

A. Full-time students, who will complete the TSU-MSW Program in one (1) year for Advanced Standing and two (2) years for the Foundation (Regular) Program, will need to enroll in 12-15 credits per semester.

B. Part-time students, who will complete the TSU-MSW Program in two (2) years for Advanced Standing and three (3) or four (4) years for the Foundation (Regular) Program, will need to enroll in 6-9 credits per semester.

C. A student wishing to change his or her enrollment status from full-time to part-time or from part-time to full-time should first discuss the matter with his or her academic advisor. A change of enrollment status does not increase the amount of time the student has to complete the MSW degree beyond four years from the date of the student's entry into the program (see Policy #1.5).

**Policy 1.5 - Statute of Limitation on Earning the MSW Degree**

There is a four-year statute of limitation on the earning of the MSW degree, consistent with the Council on Social Work Education's Accreditation Standards. The four-year period is counted from the date of entry into the program for four full academic calendar years.

Under extenuating circumstances (examples listed below), an academic advisor can recommend an extension of time to the MSW Program Coordinator. If approved, the period of extension and the conditions for completing the program will be recorded in the student's folder, with a copy sent to the student. Extenuating circumstances include the following:

• extended illness of the student

• extended personal emergency

• mobilization into a US military unit

• death of a close family member

**Policy 1.6 - Leave of Absence**

Under special circumstances, an MSW student may be granted a leave of absence from the program for a single semester or longer. A student wishing to take a leave of absence will first discuss it with their advisor, who will make the appropriate recommendation to the MSW Coordinator. If approved, the MSW Coordinator will communicate with the student in writing, identifying the decision and the semester(s) in which the leave of absence has been approved. The time out of the program during an approved leave of absence will not count against the total time allowed to complete the MSW degree.

A student wishing to take more than one semester off for a leave of absence will need to follow proper Graduate School procedures and reapply to the TSU-MSW Program upon their return.

**Policy 1.8 - Advisement**

Each MSW student will be assigned to a graduate faculty member who will serve as his or her advisor. The purposes of advisement are to:

• Provide guidance on academic matters

• Assist with problem solving

• Offer consultation on professional development and social work career opportunities

Students are expected to meet with their faculty advisors on a regular basis, at minimum once a semester and even more frequently if there is a personal problem, academic issue, or a need to discuss professional/career options.

**Policy 1.9 - MSW Graduation Requirements**

To qualify for graduation, MSW students must complete all of this program's course and field education requirements and have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. A review of course and field requirements in Degree Works with an advisor can occur at any point in the program to ensure all course and field requirements are being satisfied. In the last semester of the student’s degree program, a final Degree Works review will occur with the MSW Coordinator to verify all course and field requirements have been met and the student meets the GPA requirements of 3.0.

Students must apply for graduation through the TSU website.

**Policy 2.1 - Requirements for Admission to MSW Field**

To be accepted for foundation field education (SOWK 6130/6140), MSW students must complete MSW Practice I (SOWK 6000), Practice in HBSE (SOWK 6010), MSW Research in Practice I (SOWK 6020), and Social Welfare Policy and Practice (SOWK 6030) and achieve an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher in their MSW courses. Students must be concurrently enrolled in MSW Research in Practice II (SOWK 6120) during field. In addition, students are required to attend the MSW Field Orientation in the Fall, as well as other field education meetings. The Field Education Coordinator will notify students of their eligibility for field prior to the Spring semester.

To be accepted for concentration field education (SOWK 6310/6320), MSW students must complete Advanced Direct Practice with Individuals (SOWK 6200), either Advanced Practice with Families (SOWK 6210) or Advanced Group Practice (SOWK 6220), Advanced Macro Practice (SOWK 6230), and Social Policy Analysis and Practice (SOWK 6010) and achieve an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher in their MSW courses. Students must be concurrently enrolled in Empirical Social Work Practice (SOWK 6300) during field. In addition, students are required to attend the MSW Field Orientation in the Fall, as well as other field education meetings. The Field Education Coordinator will notify students of their eligibility for field prior to the Spring semester.

Students will meet individually with the Field Education Coordinator to discuss career interests and goals, determine the best potential field placement options, and cover the requirements for field. Students will be responsible for contacting the potential practicum agency(ies) and meeting with the field instructor to finalize the placement. Written confirmation of the placement must be received by the Field Education Coordinator prior to the end of the Fall semester. In some cases, students may not secure field placements by the deadline. In those cases, students are encouraged to work with the Field Education Coordinator to identify additional options to complete field hours.

**Policy 2.2 - Conflicts of Interest**

Field students should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with professional discretion and impartial judgment. During the field placement planning process, MSW students should let the Field Education Coordinator know about any agencies with which there may be a conflict of interest because:

1. Students and/or their family members are currently receiving or have recently finished receiving agency services.
2. A family member is currently employed by the agency or has recently left a position with the agency.

Once in the field education placement, MSW students should follow the required steps to avoid conflicts of interest:

1. Inform the field instructor when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take

reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the client's interests primary and protects client's interests to the greatest extent.

2. Refrain from taking unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploiting others to further personal, political, religious, or business interests.

3. Refrain from engaging in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of potential harm or exploitation to the client. Dual or multiple relationships occur when MSW students relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business.

4. When providing services to two or more individuals who have a relationship with each other (i.e., couples, family members), MSW students should clarify with all parties which individuals are considered clients and professional obligations to all individuals who are receiving services.

**Policy 2.3 - Confidentiality**

MSW students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior that is consistent with the

ethical standards identified in the NASW Code of Ethics. As part of this, students are expected to maintain the confidentiality of information during their practicum experiences. They should

avoid discussing the particulars of cases with friends, family members, and others not directly

involved in the cases. Students should never disclose client names to others or use actual client names in their process recordings, journals, course notebooks, papers, etc.

**Policy 2.4 - Professional Liability Insurance**

While the risk is relatively small, the student and the agency should recognize the possibility of lawsuit in a case where a student is involved, even though the suit may not involve the student directly. The TSU-MSW Program requires MSW students to carry their own malpractice insurance for all MSW students in practicum.

In some cases, agencies may be able to include students (who are their employees) under their "blanket policy." Alternatively, students can check with their insurance providers to see if they have a rider to cover such liability insurance. The Field Education Coordinator can supply a list of entities that provide liability insurance to MSW students for a fee. Within two weeks of beginning their practicum, students must submit documentation of liability insurance to the Field Education Coordinator.

**Policy 2.5 - Practicum Hours and Attendance**

The foundation practicum (SW 6130/6140) involves a total of 400 hours, or 6 credits. MSW

students can enter their foundation practicum only in the spring semester. Students have the

option of registering for all 6 credits and completing all 400 hours in a single spring semester OR registering for 3 credits and completing 200 hours in the spring semester and finishing the

remaining 3 credits/200 hours in the summer semester. Students who register for all 6 credits of foundation field education in the spring semester must complete approximately 27 hours of

practicum per week over the course of the semester, excluding the period for spring break. Those who register for 3 credits of foundation field education in the spring and 3 credits in the summer must complete approximately 15 hours of practicum per week, excluding the spring

break period and the time between semesters.

The advanced generalist concentration practicum (SW 6310/6320) involves a total of 500 hours, or 8 credits. MSW students can enter their concentration practicum only in the spring semester. Students have the option of registering for all 8 credits and completing all 500 hours in a single spring semester OR registering for 4 credits and completing.250 hours in the spring semester and finishing the remaining 4 credits/250 hours in the summer semester. Students who register for all 8 credits of concentration field education in the spring semester must complete approximately 33 hours of practicum per week over the course of the semester, excluding the period for spring break. Those who register for 4 credits of concentration field education in the spring and 4 credits in the summer must complete approximately 19 hours of practicum per week, excluding the spring break period and the time between semesters.

All students must observe agency work hours and notify the field instructor of any unavoidable absences or lateness in advance if possible. Students must make up time for being late and/or absent. Students are entitled to hazardous weather closings and to holidays that are observed by the field agency. Students are not expected to report to their field agency on holidays observed by the university, should these differ from the holidays observed by the field agency. However, students must discuss this with their field instructors prior to the absence; the field instructors may request that the students come to the agency that day.

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If approved by their field instructors, students may continue in their practicum during spring break as well as during the period between spring and summer semesters. They may complete no more than their usual number of hours per week during these periods. A schedule must be submitted to the faculty liaison at least two weeks prior to the break.

Students are responsible for completing the required number of field hours and for

maintaining a timesheet to document the completion of their field hours. Although

students sometimes will want to complete more than the required number of hours per

week in order to reduce the number of weeks in which they are at their practicum

setting, they should be aware that they have made a commitment to the agency and are expected to extend their practicum throughout the semester in which they are enrolled. Therefore, students should not expect to complete their practicum prior to the final week of classes.

Students will be given options to complete a certain number of field hours toward a learning experience separate from their field agency. Additional trainings, experiential or skills-based opportunities, attending conferences/talks, assisting professors with research, and other such professional opportunities must be approved by the Field Education Coordinator and cannot exceed 100 field hours total. Each opportunity must have a supervising faculty member or approved professional who meets the requirements of an MSW Program Field Instructor to sign off as a Field Instructor. A separate timesheet must be used for each opportunity and signed by this approved supervising Field Instructor.

**Policy 2.6 - Employment-Based Practicum**

Students who are working in a social service agency or whose employment with a social service agency will begin at least 30 days prior to the start of their field placement can request a field practicum at their place of employment. The employing agency must be agreeable to serving as the employee's field practicum site and willing to create learning experiences, provide field instruction, and comply with other field education requirements. The practicum assignment must be clearly educational, should afford the student learning experiences that contribute to his or her development as an advanced generalist social worker, and do not replicate current or past work assignments. The use of settings where the student is already an employee as a field practicum site may be permitted if the following conditions are met:

1. The field practicum must be an entirely different experience than the one where the student is working or is employed.
2. Assignments developed for the practicum must be educationally focused and must be clearly delineated from work assignments.
3. The student's work supervisor should not serve as the field instructor.
4. The person supervising the student cannot be enrolled in the TSU-MSW Program.
5. The agency must meet the same criteria as other field practicum agencies, as specified in the MSW Field Education Manual.
6. The person designated as the field instructor must meet the same criteria as other field instructors, as specified in the MSW Field Education Manual.
7. The student must fill out the Field Education Application for an employment-based

placement request.

1. The Field Education Coordinator may make an agency visit to determine appropriateness, and notify the student of the approval/denial in writing.

**Policy 2.7 - Compliance with Field Agency Policies and Procedures**

MSW students are expected to follow agency policies and procedures and abide by the rules and regulations of the agency while in their field placements. They are responsible for fulfilling the practicum agencies' requirements for background checks, health screenings, vaccines, finger printing, and the like. Students represent their practicum agencies in their contacts with clients, other agencies and organizations, and the general public. They therefore are expected to present themselves in a professional manner and to demonstrate behavior that is consistent both with agency requirements and with the NASW Code of Ethics.

**Policy 2.8 - Compliance with University Policies and Procedures**

During their field education experiences MSW students are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the TSU-MSW Program. These include, but are not limited to, university policies concerning non-discrimination, academic integrity, and harassment. Students are not only representing their practicum agencies, but also TSU and the TSU-MSW Program in their contacts with clients, other agencies and organizations, and the general public. They therefore are expected to present themselves in a professional manner and to demonstrate behavior that is consistent with university policies and codes of conduct.

**Policy 2.9 - Transportation**

All costs incurred travelling to and from the field placement agency, including but not limited to gas, parking, and tolls, are the responsibility of the student. In some cases, students may be required to use their own vehicles to perform activities associated with the field placement, such as making home visits or attending case conferences at other agencies. Students who use their own vehicles for agency business should talk with their field instructors about agency policy and procedures for reimbursement of expenses incurred. It is the students' responsibility to submit documentation required for reimbursement to the agency. Students also should discuss potential liability issues with their field instructors as well as with their insurance agents and make sure that they have adequate automobile insurance coverage. Students at times may be asked to transport clients in their own cars as part of their placement duties. If at all possible, the agency should provide students with an agency vehicle for the purpose of conducting agency business (i.e. transporting clients). However, an agency may not always be able to do this. In these cases, it is the students' responsibility to discuss with their field instructors and their insurance agents the type of automobile insurance required if they are to transport clients in their own vehicles and to ensure that they have adequate automobile insurance coverage. These liability issues should be resolved before a student transports any clients.

**Policy 2.10 - Change of Placement**

Occasionally, difficulties arise in a field placement resulting in a need to change the agency placement. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain appropriate contact with the field liaison and/or Field Education Coordinator in an attempt to prevent issues that come up in the practicum from escalating to the point where a change of placement may be required.

Students who feel they are having problems should first try to resolve the issues directly with their field instructors. If these efforts do not resolve the problem, then students should contact their field liaison. In most cases, difficulties can be resolved through the combined efforts of the student, the faculty liaison, and the field instructor.

If the difficulty is sufficiently severe and cannot be resolved in this manner, the field liaison will apprise the Field Education Coordinator of the situation and the Field Education Coordinator will consider a change of placement. If the student and the Field Education Coordinator cannot agree on an appropriate course of action, the student can ask the MSW Coordinator to become involved in the matter. If after involving the MSW Coordinator, the student still does not accept the recommended course of action, he or she can initiate an academic grievance, following the policies and procedures prescribed by the university.

Additionally, per the educational agreement between the universities and the agency, the agreement to have students placed at the agency is strictly voluntary and can be cancelled at any point.

**Policy 2.11 - Removal of a Student from Field Practicum**

Field education is considered an essential component of a MSW student's academic preparation for professional social work practice. Therefore, what happens at a student's practicum is considered to be an academic matter and, as such, comes within the purview of not only the field education policies, but also those of the TSU-MSW Program, the Graduate School, and the University.

A student can be removed from his or her field placement due to unsatisfactory performance at the practicum. Reasons for termination from a field placement include:

1. Serious or repeated violation of social work ethics as outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics.
2. Breaking a law in an agency-related matter or conviction of a felony during the practicum year. (If it is discovered while the student is in the field that the student has failed to disclose a prior serious criminal conviction, this may also be considered grounds for action.)
3. Evidence of chemical dependence or illegal use of drugs while enrolled in the program.
4. A serious breach of the practicum agency's policy.
5. A hostile or resistant attitude toward learning or supervision.
6. An inability to carry out assignments in the practicum.
7. Behavior that is emotionally or physically dangerous to agency clients or to agency staff.

A student who is terminated from his or her field placement will receive a grade of "Fail" for the field education credits in which he or she is registered and will be asked to leave the MSW Program.

**Policy 2.12 - Field Education Grading**

A formal evaluation is conducted at the end of a student's field placement. The educational objectives and tasks established in the Field Education Learning Contract and Evaluation form provide the criteria against which the student's progress can be assessed. The field instructor and student should independently evaluate the student's performance and then should discuss their assessments with each other, identifying areas of commonality as well as difference. In this way the evaluation itself can be part of the student's learning.

The field practicum is graded on "Pass" or "Fail" basis. The field instructor recommends a grade to the field liaison. However, it is the field liaison, as a faculty member, who ultimately is responsible for assigning the grade and submitting it to the university.

The option of repeating a course in which a failing grade is received does not extend to field education (SW 6130/6140 and SW 6310/6320). Therefore, if a student receives a grade of "Fail" for the field practicum, he or she will be asked to leave the MSW program. The student has the right to appeal the grade of "Fail"; the procedures a student must use to appeal a grade are described in the Graduate Catalog.

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) may be given if the student has not completed the required number of field hours or assignments. The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a temporary grade indicating that the student has performed satisfactorily in the field placement but was unable to complete all practicum hours or assignments due to unforeseen circumstances. The field liaison, the field instructor, and the student jointly decide on the terms for the removal of the incomplete. If the grade of "I" (Incomplete) is not removed within the following semester, the grade will be changed from an "I" to an "F" (Fail) grade and, as described above, the student will be asked to leave the TSU-MSW program.

**Policy 3.1 - Counseling Out**

"Counseling out" is a term used to describe discontinuing a student's enrollment in the TSU­MSW Program. In most cases, the decision to discontinue a student from the program is considered permanent. In certain circumstances, a student may be counseled out with specific remedial steps to be taken before formal re-application to the program may be made.

A student may be counseled out of the program on recommendation by a faculty member, field instructor, or a participating practicum agency. The recommendation is made to the Chair of the Department of Social Work and Urban Studies. The Chair will consult with the MSW Coordinator and with all other graduate social work faculty familiar with the student's performance prior to this action being taken. A formal vote is required to initiate such a process, and will include the MSW Coordinator and the graduate faculty in the TSU-MSW Program.

A MSW student may be counseled out of the program on the basis of:

1. Academic Performance: Student must meet grade requirements. Student must pursue academic honesty and demonstrate academic integrity.
2. Absenteeism: Student must meet the requirements of class and practicum attendance.
3. Professional Behavior: Student must act in a professional manner with peers, faculty, agency personnel, and clients; always treating others with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith. Student should behave in a fashion consistent with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).
4. Assaultive or Threatening Behavior: Student must participate in appropriate behavior directed at clients, colleagues, or instructors.
5. Damaging Behavior: Student must treat others with respect, demonstrate a respect for diversity, protect confidentiality, ensure freedom of expression, and demonstrate a commitment to community.
6. Ineffectiveness in Work with Clients: Student must demonstrate minimal levels of effective performance and apply progressive learning techniques to evidence progress in working with clients. Student must not violate practicum agency policy.

Progressive Discipline. If a student violates any of the above tenets, the student will be counseled and receive one warning if appropriate. Continuation of the behavior will result in being counseled out of the program. However, dangerous violations can result in immediate expulsion.

Students have the right to appeal the counseling out decision through the identified grievance procedures of the Social Work Program, the Graduate School, and the University.