

FAQ's for MSW Program

What is the meaning of your concentration, *Advanced Generalist Community Social Work* (AGCSW)?

AGCSW refers to social work training that offers a broad base of knowledge and skills to prepare students for work in a variety of settings at different levels of practice, from micro to macro. It reflects a viewpoint that *community* is integral to the lives of people, individually and collectively. To quote our formal definition, AGCSW means: “multilevel, situation-driven, strengths-based social work practice that values diversity and the central importance of community; [AGCSW] promotes social and economic justice, and uses creativity, critical thinking, and leadership in the service of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.”

Do you offer Advanced Standing for MSW applicants with a bachelor's degree in social work?

Yes. Students with a BSW degree from an accredited social work program who graduated *no more than 7 years ago* are eligible to apply for Advanced Standing. Make sure you indicate clearly that you are applying for Advanced Standing (complete the MSW Program Selection Form in addition to the regular graduate application, both found at, <http://usm.maine.edu/grad/admission.html>). To apply for Advanced Standing, you must also have earned a minimum GPA of 3.0 in your BSW program. If you are applying to the MSW program while you are still completing your BSW degree, you must anticipate *full completion of all degree requirements* by May of the year you are applying. All applicants in this situation are accepted conditionally will not be allowed to enroll in any graduate courses until all degree requirements are met and you have conferred your degree officially.

Am I required to take the MAT or GRE as part of my application?

No. The School of Social Work no longer uses these exam scores as part of application assessment.

Is your MSW program accredited?

Yes. Both the MSW and BSW programs at USM are fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

How much does it cost to attend USM?

For information about tuition and fees for attending the MSW program please see the Student Billing Office web page for current information: <http://usm.maine.edu/busoftuition.htm>, or call (207) 780-5200.

Do you offer night courses for students who work full time?

A number of courses are offered in the evening (after 4 pm) to accommodate working student schedules. However, it is likely that you will not be able to take all classes for your degree after work hours. While we try our best to schedule as many late classes as possible, there may be some classes you'll need to take during day hours.

Do you offer any courses on-line?

The majority of courses are offered in a live format currently, but we have several faculty members who offer courses on-line. Some of these courses are in "hybrid" format, where, for instance, students come once per month during a given semester for a live meeting with the rest of the course conducted on-line.

I am planning to apply to the MSW program but would like to take a course or two as a non-matriculated student. Is this allowed?

Yes, you may take up to 9 credits (3 courses) as a non-matriculated student. The particular courses offered to non-matriculated students are: SWO 501, Multicultural Social Work, SWO 502 & 552 Critical Thinking about Human Behavior I & II, and SWO 505, Research I. Certain elective courses may also be available, with permission of the instructors. Non-matriculated students are allowed to take these courses, space permitting, and can register once all matriculated MSW students are enrolled (for fall semester, non-matric registration takes place in August; for spring semester, late November). To register for a course, contact Kitte Brennan, the SSW Administrative Assistant (kbrennan@usm.maine.edu, or 207-780-4120). It is important to note that taking a course as a non-matriculated student does not guarantee admission to the program, should you apply; however, taking a course and doing well is a positive addition to an application.

How do I apply to the MSW Program?

The Office of Graduate Admissions Web site has all application information and materials: <http://www.usm.maine.edu/grad/admission.html>. If you prefer to have materials mailed to you, contact Graduate Admissions at gradstudies@usm.maine.edu or call (207)780-4386.

Once I apply to the MSW program, how can I be sure all of my application materials have arrived to the Graduate Office?

This is an important question. Applicants are responsible for tracking their own applications and making sure all materials are received and filed in accordance with application deadlines—you will not be contacted about missing application materials so it is important to monitor this yourself. The University makes this easy for you, though. Once an application file is opened for you, prompted by the receipt your initial application form, you will be given an activation code that allows you to log onto

Mainstreet to check the status of your application:

https://peportal.maine.edu/psp/PAPRD89/EMPLOYEE/EMPL/h/?tab=PAPP_GUEST.

Here it will tell you what has been received and what is missing and it is strongly recommended that you get your initial application form in early to initiate access to Mainstreet (versus waiting until just before the final deadline). Should you have difficulty accessing this information of Mainstreet, you can contact the Office of Graduate Admissions at: gradstudies@usm.maine.edu or call (207) 780-4386 for assistance or to check the status of your application. It is important that you try to use Mainstreet first before making this contact because, given the high volume of applications coming into USM for graduate studies, you may not receive the most prompt response to your query from admissions staff at peak times of the admissions cycle (January-April). It is important that ALL applicant materials are received by the deadlines as we will not guarantee review of late applications, so please check the status of your application often until you know all materials have reached your file.

If I am admitted to the program and need to wait to attend, can I defer my enrollment?

Yes, you may defer your enrollment for ONE year. For example, if you are accepted for entrance in fall 2010 and you want to defer, you could then enter the program in fall 2011 without reapplication. After that, reapplication is required. In order to defer, you must first submit your request to the MSW coordinator in via e-mail or in a letter (Jeanette Andonian, andonian@usm.maine.edu) that you would like to do this and you MUST submit your \$200 deposit to the Graduate Office to hold your seat for the following year. Without the written request and the deposit, you will not have deferment status.

Can I apply to the program if my bachelor's degree is not related to social work?

By all means, yes. We welcome applicants with different academic backgrounds. We do require a liberal arts foundation (18 credits in liberal arts courses), one introductory course both in psychology and sociology, and one statistics course in some field. If you do not have all of these courses, you can still apply and may be accepted on the condition that you complete certain courses before beginning the program.

If I have a GPA below 3.0 in my undergraduate work, should I bother to apply?

We require that applicants have at least a 3.0 in undergraduate work. However, if your GPA is lower, you may still be reviewed and considered if other aspects of your application are very strong. For instance, if you have worked in a job related to social work and have done well with this, this would work in your favor as an applicant. If you write a strong essay and include high quality references that convey you are academically capable and skilled, that would serve you well also. If your GPA is lower than 3.0, you can still apply and we encourage you to provide other materials that will demonstrate your strengths and potential in the program and in the field. Some people with low undergraduate GPA's might take a course as a non-matriculated student—doing well in

one of these courses (and perhaps securing a reference from the instructor) will aid your application.

I am interested in graduate assistantships in the School of Social Work. How can I find out more about this?

The School of Social Work has a limited number of assistantships available (from 1-3, available in a given year, as funding permits) and this varies from year to year. If you are interested in being considered for one of these positions, make sure you indicate this on your application (there is a question about this on the application). You can contact the Office of Graduate Admissions for general information about assistantships or follow this link to learn more: <http://www.usm.maine.edu/grad/graduateassistantship.html>. The selection of graduate assistantship recipients takes place during the spring or summer before the beginning of the new academic year.

How does USM place students in field settings?

The USM SSW Field Coordinator and Field Associate work closely with each student to secure a field placement that is both a good fit for the student and meets the criteria for a sound training experience. If accepted to the MSW program, one of the first steps to take after confirming your agreement to attend and submitting your \$200 deposit is to contact the Field Coordinator or Associate to begin the placement process. This involves scheduling a meeting to discuss your interests and following through with arranging interviews at sites identified as viable options for your training. Students who make this contact promptly have the widest variety of field placement options—on the other hand, students who wait too long end up with very limited field choices.

Would I be allowed to do a field placement in my place of employment?

Students are strongly discouraged from using their employment site for a field practicum because:

Field placement is intended to expose students to a new learning experience and environment; both the student and employment supervisor are apt to experience role confusion with the addition of a field practicum relationship; the expectations of a placement relationship and a work relationship are different (field placement should be educationally focused rather than centered on agency service); students might be less likely to take a critical/objective stance toward their agencies or to question agency policies.

This said, students are sometimes allowed to use a work site as a field placement. If a student wants to propose this, the following steps apply:

1. Students must first meet with the Field Coordinator or Field Associate to discuss the viability of such a proposal and to get a copy of the Placement at Place of Employment contract to complete as soon as possible. Completed contracts must be returned to either the Field Coordinator or Field Associate before the placement can be officially approved.

2. The Field Coordinator or Field Associate assesses the employment site for field placement suitability, which includes the appointment of a qualified Field Instructor (someone other than the employment supervisor).
3. The agency must provide field instruction with an MSW who has two years post-masters practice experience.
4. The student's practicum roles must be different from regular employment, provide new learning opportunities and appropriate to the student's level of social work training.
5. The student must show how she/he plans to fulfill the placement hour requirements beyond her/his regularly scheduled employment time.

Advanced standing students may not use their current employment for their one year of field placement. Two-year students may only use their current employment for one of their two placement years.

With a degree from your program with its AGCSW orientation, will I be eligible for the LCSW, the state's clinical license for social workers?

While the state licensing board makes the decisions about eligibility for clinical licensure, our MSW graduates have been very successful in securing the LCSW. Our program offers clinical content within the AGCSW framework to reach this goal and students are allowed to take clinical electives outside of the program too (up to 6 credits outside of SW, for instance, in counseling). In fact, our graduates who pursue this level of license (which is most of our students) pass the LCSW exam at a rate significantly higher than national averages. This tells us that not only are our students eligible for licensure, but they are well prepared to pass the exam once they complete our program.

Can I find out in advance if certain courses offered at the School of Social Work are approved for licensure by the licensing board?

Course approvals are not done by the School of Social Work. The licensing board reviews courses in the process of candidate applications for licensure. It is strongly recommended that social work students maintain a file of syllabi for the courses they have taken in the event that the board requests more detailed information about a course when they apply for licensure.

Where can I find out information about social work licensure in Maine?

All licensure questions should be directed to the board itself, (207)624-8609. The board web site is also a good source of information:

http://www.state.me.us/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/social_workers/index.htm