

FAQs for USM's BSW Program

The following questions and answers provide answers to common questions about our program. Please read this material carefully. If you have questions that are not answered here, feel free to contact the School of Social Work at 207-780-4120.

1. Is the USM BSW program accredited?

Yes. The BSW program in social work prepares the student for the professional practice of social work at the entry level. Our social work curriculum was re-accredited in 2013 by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the national accrediting body for schools of social work, for eight years.

2. What is Advanced Standing?

Students who receive a degree from an accredited undergraduate program in social work may apply to selected graduate schools of social work for advanced standing. You must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0. If you are accepted as Advanced Standing, you can finish an MSW in less than two years and in most cases, one year. Advanced Standing is NOT automatic but up to the MSW institution you apply to.

3. What courses will I take?

The social work program offers a variety of courses to fulfill the requirements of your major. They include classes in the following categories: Core, Foundation, Major and Elective. You will be assigned a faculty advisor who will help you create a schedule each semester, to support your academic progress. Your advisor will guide you in the selection of appropriate courses to help you fulfill your requirements. There is a catalogue and a Student Handbook online for your reference. During the first years at USM, with the assistance of faculty advisors, students enroll in a combination of classes fulfilling their Core curriculum requirements, required foundation courses for social work (classes in other fields required by the major), and required and elective courses in social work. Because many classes are prerequisites for other classes, students must carefully sequence their courses. Your advisor as well as the catalogue on line and the BSW Handbook is the best sources of information about how to sequence courses.

4. What if I am transferring from another college?

Students transferring to USM from another college or university must first have their college transcript evaluated by the Office of Transfer Affairs. If you have social work classes that you would like to transfer in, we require you to provide the class syllabus for review. If the social work courses were taken in an accredited social work program, it is likely that they will be approved.

5. How do I get a faculty advisor?

Students who declare a major in their freshman or sophomore years will be assigned an advisor in the Student Success Office. Upon reaching the junior year, a School of Social Work faculty advisor will be assigned. If at any time you are unsure of who your advisor is, you can look at your student account on MaineStreet or you can contact Cathryn Egan-Arnold at 780-4120.

6. Why do I need an advisor?

To ensure that you are taking courses in the proper order it is important that social work majors meet with their advisors on a regular basis, once a semester as a minimum. Advising in the School of Social Work is a mutual process of exploring career objectives, reviewing requirements, designing the best possible combination of required courses and electives, determining proper course sequencing, and facilitating a collaborative relationship between the student and the School.

7. What is Field Work?

Throughout your required and elective social work courses, you will have experiences in social work agencies. Some of these experiences will be in the form of service-learning and the remainder will occur in your last year of school while you are enrolled in Field Work courses. During the Field Work year, each student is placed in a community social service agency selected and approved by the Field Work Coordinators. Field work placements only begin in the fall and students continue into the second semester in the same agency. By the end of the second semester of field work (the student's last semester of school), each student will have accrued 480 hours in the assigned agency. Generally this breaks down to 16 hours a week during the semesters. A large number of community agencies in the Southern Maine area have been most generous in their collaboration with the School of Social Work and in providing supervision of students. All students should refer to the Field Work Manual for more information and guidelines governing field work. Students have input into their choice of agencies, but depending on geography and other needs, you may not receive your first choice.

In order to advance to SWO 393 (Social Work Methods I) and then Field Work, students must be junior status, have completed certain pre-requisites, have a 2.5 cumulative grade point average, and a grade of C (2.5) or better in all major and foundation classes. Students may also be evaluated as to their suitability to the profession.

8. What is the minimum GPA (Grade Point Average) that I must maintain?

To major in social work, all students must maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average and a grade of C or better in all major and foundation courses. Once at the level of applying for methods/field work (entering SWO 393) Students must maintain the 2.5

GPA and a C or better in all required social work and foundation courses to complete the major.

9. Are there social work student organizations I could join?

The students of the School have organized a Social Work Student Organization. The organization seeks to facilitate communication between students and faculty, ensure student involvement in School activities, provide for professional growth, and respond to issues and problems in the community. Student representatives may attend faculty meetings and may serve as advisory members on the SSW's curriculum committee. Within the School, a chapter of the Phi Alpha Honor Society also exists.

10. What social work courses are required?

SWO 201 Introduction to Social Work
SWO 250 Introduction to Social Welfare
SWO 333 Social Work Research I
SWO 334 Social Work Research II
SWO 350 Social Welfare Policy
SWO 365 Examining Oppression and Valuing Diversity
SWO 370 Human Behavior in the Social Environment
SWO 393 Methods of Social Work Practice I
SWO 403 Methods of Social Work Practice II
SWO 404 Methods of Social Work Practice III
SWO 411 Field Work I
SWO 412 Field Work II
1 SWO 3XX Upper Level Social Work Electives

11. What do I do if I have a grievance about a grade or another issue?

There are formal procedures for the adjudication of student grievances in instances where a student believes that his or her rights have been denied or violated. Grievances from students can be brought forward based on grading practices, discrimination or harassment, or termination from a field practicum. The student might first make an appointment to speak to the faculty member or other person against whom you wish to file a grievance. If that is not possible, or if the issue is not resolved, it then goes to the Coordinator of the BSW program, and, if the issue is still not resolved, the final point of appeal is to the Director of the School.

Grade disputes that cannot be resolved between faculty and the student are handled by the Dean of the College of Management and Human Service. Claims of discrimination or harassment are brought to the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity.

Student complaints regarding the field work placement are handled within the School of Social Work. These issues are first addressed with the student's field faculty liaison who will involve the supervisor at the field placement and the field work coordinators. A

variety of options will be explored and this may be accomplished through the Academic Review procedure which brings a number of viewpoints to the table. This process is explained further in the Field Work Manual and the BSW Handbook.

12. Can I concentrate in a particular field of social work at the undergraduate level?

No. The BSW program prepares students for *generalist social work practice*. Grounded in a commitment to professional ethics, social and economic justice and the empowerment of client systems at all levels, generalist social work practice is built upon ten core competencies, as outlined in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education. The competencies relate to: professional identity, ethical practice, critical thinking, diversity, human rights and social justice, research, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, evolving contexts of social work practice, and professional interventions at multiple levels. Some MSW programs do have specific concentrations in a particular area.

If you have a particular career aspiration in mind, such as work with the elderly, refugees, corrections, child and family services, health care, etc., your advisor can help you to select appropriate foundation and elective courses that will assist you in preparing for jobs in these areas.

13. I have worked in social services for many years. Can I receive required course credit or a waiver for my professional or military work experiences?

Based on the policies of our accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), you cannot receive required course credit or waiver for life or professional or military work experience. You may however go to the Office of Prior Learning and ask about receiving prior learning credit, but this is usually for elective classes.

14. Do you offer night or weekend classes for students who work?

At this point in time, no required social work courses are offered on the weekends. Some classes are offered in the evenings (after 4 pm) to accommodate students who work during the daytime. However, we do not have enough faculty to offer all courses during both the day and the evening times. While we try our best to schedule as many late classes as possible, there will be some courses that must be taken during the day.

15. Do you offer any courses online?

There are three types of course offerings: on-line, blended, and traditional in-the-classroom courses. On-line courses offer all course activity on line. Blended courses are partially on-line but also have a few sessions in the classroom. The majority of our classes at this time are traditional courses offered in the classroom. Some required courses have two sections and students may choose a blended (or completely on-line) section or a traditional in-the-classroom section.

16. Am I allowed to do a placement at my place of employment?

Students are strongly discouraged by the accrediting body 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 the employing agency and supervisor are apt to experience role confusion with the addition of a field practicum relationship. Also, the expectations of a placement relationship and a work relationship are different (field placement is focused on student learning rather than agency service). Students might be less likely to take a critical/objective stance toward their agencies or to question agency policies. However, occasionally students are able to construct a placement that also fits into their job responsibilities. If a student wants to propose this, and the agency is willing to engage in a specific contract with the School of Social Work, the student must first consult with one of the Field Work Coordinators.

17. Can I become a State of Maine Licensed Social Worker after graduation?

Yes, our BSW graduates are eligible for the LSW license. You can find out the latest information on licensing at:

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

18. How can I find out what is going on in the School of Social Work?

You can sign up for the BSW or MSW listserv by contacting the Administrative Specialist at 207-780-4120. Please be sure to let them know to which listserv you need to be added to.