



DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL WORK

Procedures for Admission to the Major

Admission Process

The admissions process and criteria reflect the Messiah University Department of Social Work's commitment to preparing students for entry-level generalist social work practice and graduate school attendance. The social work faculty believes that students in the social work major must understand and demonstrate the competencies, values, ethics, and professional behaviors that uphold the values and ethics of the social work profession and Messiah University. Students will follow a two-step process for admission into the social work Department.

Step 1: Declaration of Major

Declaration of social work as a major by formally completing required paperwork requesting the social work major and submitting necessary forms to the Office of the Registrar. Students may declare social work as part of the admissions process when accepted to the university. Students are expected to select a major no later than the end of the second semester of the sophomore year in order to allow adequate time for meeting graduation requirements in that major. The social work major does not grant students course credit for life experience or previous work experience.

Step 2: Submission of the Admission Application and Written Statement

Application for formal admission into the major occurs when the following criteria are met:

1. Completion of the following courses:
 - a. SOWK 099 Professionalism
 - b. SOWK 120 Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare
 - c. SOWK 221 Human Behavior in the Social Environment
 - d. SOWK 250 Social Work Practice with Individuals
 - e. SOWK 251: Field Experience: Practice with Individuals
2. Satisfactory progress in SOWK 360 Social Work Practice with Families and SOWK 361: Field Experience: Practice with Families.
3. Students will complete an **application for admission to the major** and a *written statement (typed)* during the spring semester of their sophomore year or when the above criteria are met. Please refer to **Appendix A** for instructions on the written statement. Applications are to be completed and submitted by the first Monday in February to the Department's administrative assistant, Heather Bledsoe hbledsoe@messiah.edu.

Step 3: Review of the Submitted Application and Written Statement

The Admission Committee comprises at least two Community Advisory Board members, the Department Chair, and the Field Director. The committee will review the submitted applications using the **Admission Committee Worksheet** (see *Appendix B*).

Acceptance into the major is based upon the assessment of the student's academic standing, the possession of professional social work values and ethics, the student's interest in and commitment to the profession of social work, the student's commitment to the integration of Christian faith with social work practice, and demonstration of social work competency proportionate to sophomore status in the major.

Step 4: Meeting with the Social Work Faculty

The Department Chair and Field Director will meet with each applicant to review the status of their application to the major by March 30th. Each student will receive the completed Admission Committee Worksheet outlining one of three decisions: Admission to the Major, Conditional Admission, or Non-Admission to the major during the face-to-face meeting. Each applicant will receive a formal letter from the department with the admission results by April 1. Please refer to *Appendix C* for additional information on Admittance to the Social Work Major, Conditional Admittance to the Social Work Major, or Non-admittance to the Social Work Major.

Appendix A

Written Statement Instructions

I. Introduction

Please explain the main reasons for your interest in the profession of social work.

II. Academic Progress and Competency Development

- a. Grade Average for SOWK Courses: Each applicant must provide a grade average of each completed and current SOWK course at the time of application submission. Applicants are expected to earn a 2.3 (C+) or higher in social work required courses. The courses that must be included in the reporting include SOWK120, SOWK221, SOWK250, SOWK251, SOWK360, and SOWK361. Students taking additional SOWK courses at the time of application must report the grade progress of these social work courses.
- b. Overall GPA in the Social Work Major: Applicants are expected to have a 2.7 GPA or higher in the Social Work Major.
- c. Cumulative GPA: Applicants are expected to have an overall cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher.

- d. Plan for Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress: The applicant will articulate a specific plan using the SMART Goals for maintaining good academic standing in the social work major (250 words maximum).
- e. Applicants who do not meet the stated GPA criteria of the Social Work Major (b) or the Cumulative GPA (c) are expected to address the challenges and provide a specific plan using the SMART Goals for attaining good academic standing in the major (250 words maximum).

Note: Students with a below 2.3 (C+) grade in a required SOWK class must submit a plan for retaking the course, including a discussion with their academic advisor

III. Social Work Values and Ethics

The applicant must review and summarize their understanding of the values and ethics outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics. They should indicate not only their comprehension of the Code but also their level of support for it. Additionally, the applicant must identify a specific social work value and explain its importance in their professional development as a social worker. The response should be no more than 250 words.

IV. Professionalism in Social Work

The applicant is required to read the handbook of the social work department and summarize their understanding of the policies related to the importance of professionalism within the field. Additionally, the applicant should identify a specific issue or policy that may present a personal challenge and explain how they plan to address this challenge to enhance their professional practice in social work. Please limit your response to a maximum of 250 words.

V. Cultural Competence

The applicant must demonstrate a clear understanding of cultural competence and explain the steps they are taking to achieve it. Additionally, the applicant should identify a specific area or population where their personal cultural competence needs improvement and outline a concrete plan to enhance their skills in that area. The response should not exceed 250 words.

VI. Critical Thinking and Self-Awareness

The applicant is expected to explain how their faith influences their practice in social work and presents challenges in this field. They should identify specific aspects of their faith that impact particular practice areas or issues and discuss any faith-based beliefs or practices that may pose challenges when working with clients. For example, they might explore how their faith shapes their understanding of human behavior and the potential difficulties this perspective creates when interacting with a specific client. The student should also describe how they resolve, plan to resolve or maintain a balance in these issues while remaining competent, ethical, and professional. Additionally, the applicant must provide at least two professional sources to support their approach, with a maximum word count of 300.

Appendix B

ADMISSION COMMITTEE WORKSHEET

Reviewer Name:

Student Name:

Content Area	Admission to the major	Conditional Admission	Non-Admission	Note
Reasons for selecting the social work profession				
The student clearly articulates the reasons for choosing the field of social work.				
Academic Progress and Competency Development				
a. Grade Average for SOWK Courses: Applicants are expected to earn a 2.3 (C+) or higher in social work required courses. The courses that must be included in the reporting include SOWK120, SOWK221, SOWK250, SOWK251, SOWK360, and SOWK361.				
b. Satisfactory GPA in the Major: Student submitted GPA in the Major (2.7 GPA or higher in the Social Work Major)				
c. Satisfactory Overall GPA: (2.5 Cumulative GPA or higher)				
d. Plan for Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress using the SMART Goals				
Social Work Values and Ethics				
a. Student reported reading and understanding of the NASW Code of Ethics				
b. Student demonstrated understanding of the connection between values and professional development				
Professionalism in Social Work				
a. Student reported reading and understanding the Social Work Handbook (or section assigned)				

b. Student demonstrated self-awareness and self-reflection in assessing professional development				
Cultural Competence				
a. Student articulated a clear understanding of cultural competence and a plan to attain cultural competence.				
b. Student identified an area needing improvement and a specific plan to improve cultural competence.				
Critical Thinking and Self-Awareness				
a. Student demonstrated critical thinking in articulating components of faith that informs practice				
b. Student demonstrated self-awareness when discussing faith beliefs/practices that may create challenges.				
c. Student provided evidence of critical thinking and self-awareness when discussing how they resolve/plan to resolve/hold in tension challenges related to faith and practice.				
SMART Goals				
In all areas requiring a plan, the student included one that met the SMART plan expectations (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely).				
APA 7th Format				
_____ The written statement is double-spaced with 1" margins _____ 12 pt font, New Times Roman _____ Abstract is well written _____ The cover page is in the correct format _____ References on separate titled page (centered) _____ References are listed alphabetically _____ All citations are complete and correctly applied.				

Writing Mechanics				
The written statement was in a scholarly tone and demonstrated clarity and conciseness.				
Recommendation				

Appendix C

Additional information on Admittance to the Social Work Major

Admittance to the Social Work Major

Students who meet the following requirements will be granted admission to the social work major as outlined in the Student Handbook received when meeting with the advisor:

- 1) 2.3 (C+) or higher in SOWK course
- 2) 2.7 or higher overall GPA in the Social Work Major
- 3) 2.5 or higher cumulative GPA
- 4) Demonstrates social work ethical, professional, and competency standards
- 5) Meet the APA 7th writing standards as listed in the application instructions

**If a student falls below these requirements at any time, their status will be reviewed by social work faculty, and conditional status may be imposed. Students are expected to notify their advisor within two weeks if this occurs. Student infraction of the community covenant or violating the Social Work Code of Ethics may also prompt conditional status or removal from the major.*

Conditional Admittance to the Social Work Major

Students not meeting all five requirements will be considered for conditional status if the committee determines that the student can adequately address the areas of concern and that there is sufficient time to develop a plan to meet program requirements. Students achieving conditional status must develop a plan in consultation with their advisor to earn admission status and will have their application reviewed at both three months and at six months (in most cases this will occur during fall advising) to evaluate change in status. Revisions to the application by the student will be submitted to the Department Chair by April 15. The Chair will review the changes and schedule a follow-up with the student by May 30th to evaluate the change in status (removal of conditional to acceptance or continuance of working toward acceptance.)

If the student is not removed from conditional during the follow up with the Chair, then the student and their advisor will continue to make a plan to work towards acceptance, and the plan will be reviewed again during fall advising. Students on conditional status are not eligible for senior field placement (SOWK 490) except in circumstances where the student has demonstrated an ability to meet social work ethical, competency, and professional standards and where it is likely the student can meet the standards to graduate with a social

work degree. Exceptions to the policy will be decided on a case-to-case basis by the Department Chair in consultation with the department.

Non-admittance to the Social Work Major

Students not meeting all five of the requirements, who may be demonstrating behavior that is incompetent, unethical, or unprofessional, who may be demonstrating behavior that violates Department, University, agency, professional or state policy, or where it is determined that the student is unlikely to meet the standards to graduate with a social work degree, may not be admitted to the social work major and may not register for SOWK 372: Social Work Practice with Groups or SOWK 475: Social Work Practice with Communities and Organizations. Students may re-apply in the following semester. Students are not eligible to re-apply to the major more than once during their academic career.

Additional Admittance Information

1. Students on academic probation cannot apply for admission until their GPA is above 2.0, and they may not schedule any further social work classes until their GPA is above 2.0.
2. Students who have not achieved full admission to the major (i.e., have conditional admission) must be reviewed by the Department Chair and Field Coordinator prior to registering for SOWK 484 Preparation for Field Practice. The faculty must agree to grant an exception to policy in order for the student to proceed into the department's senior field component.
3. The admissions committee promptly informs the student's faculty advisor of the student's admission status. The advisor works with students with conditional acceptance to develop a plan to achieve full admittance to the social work major by the fall of the student's senior year so that senior field placement can still be put into place. If a student is not accepted to the major, the faculty advisor helps the student review options and make other plans to change to another academic major.

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