

Messiah University

BSW Student Handbook

2025 -2026

**He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and
to walk humbly with your God.**

Micah 6: 8



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A WORD FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR.....	4
SOCIAL WORK FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT STAFF.....	5
PROGRAM MISSION AND GOALS	6
MESSIAH UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT	6
MISSION OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS, CULTURE AND SOCIETY.....	6
SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT	6
SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT GOALS	6
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM CORE COMPETENCIES.....	7
ACCREDITATION.....	8
BSW CURRICULUM.....	9
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW.....	9
SOCIAL WORK MAJOR (70 CREDITS)	9
SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT POLICIES.....	10
SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL ETHICS.....	10
<i>CLASSROOM LEARNING</i>	10
<i>FIELD EXPERIENCE</i>	10
<i>CONFIDENTIALITY</i>	11
<i>COMMUNICATION</i>	11
<i>COMPETENCE</i>	11
<i>INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS</i>	12
<i>SOCIAL MEDIA</i>	12
PROCEDURES FOR ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR	13
<i>STEP 1: DECLARATION OF MAJOR</i>	13
<i>STEP 2: SUBMISSION OF THE ADMISSION APPLICATION AND WRITTEN STATEMENT</i>	13
<i>STEP 3: REVIEW OF THE SUBMITTED APPLICATION AND WRITTEN STATEMENT</i>	14
<i>STEP 4: MEETING WITH THE SOCIAL WORK FACULTY</i>	14
BSW SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL	15
CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING.....	15
CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE POLICY	15
POLICY RELATED TO NOT OFFERING COURSE CREDIT FOR LIFE OR WORK EXPERIENCE	16
TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY FOR FIELD EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK COURSES	16
ACADEMIC POLICIES SPECIFIC TO THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT	16
MESSIAH UNIVERSITY GOOD MORAL CHARACTER AND INFRACTIONS	17
PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR PROBATION AND DISMISSAL	17
PROCEDURES FOR DISMISSAL FROM THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT FOR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE	18
PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR APPEALS OF SUSPENSION OR DISMISSAL	18
ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISING.....	19
<i>Distinction Between Academic and Professional Advising</i>	19
<i>Faculty Advisor Assignment</i>	19

Messiah University Department of Social Work

<i>Professional Advising Services</i>	20
Appreciative Advising Framework	21
Advising Service Formats.....	21
<i>How to Access Advising Services</i>	21
<i>Additional Resources</i>	22
STUDENT SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS.....	23
SOCIAL WORK CLUB	23
PHI ALPHA HONOR SOCIETY	23
STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING	25
APPENDIX A: GOODNESS OF FIT POLICY	26
APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD.....	27

A WORD FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Dear Social Work Students,

Welcome to your journey with the Messiah University Social Work Department!

The mission of the social work profession is to support and equip individuals in their growth and pursuit of human flourishing. Social workers play a vital role in our society as well-trained professionals who address the complex needs of individuals. The faculty at Messiah is committed to developing and nurturing skilled social workers who will serve people from diverse backgrounds with the compassion of Jesus. We adhere to the nine core competencies defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) while also incorporating a tenth, faith-based competency. Throughout your time in the Messiah University Social Work program, you will discover a supportive community dedicated to helping you become a competent, ethical, and faith-integrated professional. Thank you for the honor of embarking on this exciting journey with you. We are thrilled to have you join our community of compassionate world changers!

Grace & Peace,

Dr. Ling Dinse

Ling Dinse, DSW, MSW, LSW

Department Chair and Director of the BSW Program



SOCIAL WORK FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT STAFF

Ling Dinse, DSW, MSW, LSW

Position: Department Chair and Director of the Social Work Program
Associate Professor of Social Work

Education: Doctor of Social Work, Millersville University, Millersville, 2018
Master of Social Work, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1996
Bachelor of Arts, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1994

Licensure: Licensed Social Worker in Pennsylvania (1996 – Present)

Research Interests: Intentional Dialogues
Racism & Racial Relations
Racial Reconciliation
Caring for Human Trafficking Survivors
Integration of Social Work and Faith
Church Trauma

Personal Interests: Chocolate, Coffee, Conversations with Family & Friends, and Reading

Email address: ldinse@messiah.edu

Michelle George, MSW, LCSW

Position: Social Work Field Director
Associate Professor of Social Work

Education: M.S.W., Temple University School of Social Administration, 1994
BA in Psychology, Messiah University, 1988
Clinical Social Work license for PA
Board Certified Diplomat (BCD) in Clinical Social Work

Professional Interests: Clinical Social Work and Counseling Practice
Christian Counseling and Spiritual Formation
Diversity and Reconciliation

Personal interests: Spending time with family, hiking, hunting, gardening, kayaking, music, and reading

Email address: MGeorge@messiah.edu

Heather Bledsoe

Position: Administrative Assistant

Education: Harrisburg Area Community College
Associate Degree in Business Management, 2000

Personal Interest: Spending time with family and friends, enjoying nature, finding new cafes and coffee shops, and traveling

Email address: hbledsoe@messiah.edu

PROGRAM MISSION AND GOALS

MESSIAH UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Messiah University is a Christian University of the liberal arts and applied arts and sciences, which offers programs leading to B.S. and B.A. degrees. The University is committed to embracing an evangelical spirit rooted in the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian church. The mission of Messiah University is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.

MISSION OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The Mission of the School of Arts, Culture and Society is to prepare students to serve God in church, society, and their professions by applying their understanding of human thought, development, learning, social structures, and interactions to complex social issues and environments.

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Social Work Department at Messiah University is to offer a professional degree rooted in a strong liberal arts foundation, equipping graduates for ethical and competent entry-level generalist social work practice while also preparing students for graduate studies. Guided by the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the mission and values of Messiah University, the Department integrates principles of Christian faith with social work values, knowledge, and skills. The Department is dedicated to evidence-informed practice, service learning at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, a commitment to community, respect for diversity and human rights, and advocacy for advancing social and economic justice for all individuals.

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT GOALS

Program goals are shaped by the university and the social work program's mission, with each goal intentionally designed to promote the development of students' knowledge, values, and skills. The Department goals are as follows:

1. To develop competent social workers who critically evaluate, self-reflect, and are self-aware of how their Christian faith informs their practice while performing their vocational duties in a professional and ethical manner.
2. To develop social workers who engage with the world to facilitate change by enhancing community and actively participating in issues that address social and economic justice in rural, urban, and international settings.
3. To cultivate effective Christian social work leaders in providing micro, mezzo, and macro programming who value integrity, service, and the significance of human relationships in addressing human needs and the challenges faced by the disenfranchised.

4. To develop Christian social workers who emphasize empowerment and the strengths perspective in applying the skills and knowledge of generalist social work with systems of all sizes while promoting respect for clients' age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
5. Integration of Faith and Practice: A unique characteristic of the Department is its goal of connecting faith development with competent, ethical, and professional social work practice. The Social Work Department at Messiah University aims to prepare Christian social work students for the maturity of Christian faith, intellect, and character in preparation for lives of service and leadership.

SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM CORE COMPETENCIES

The Program assesses student learning based on the nine core competencies defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2022), along with the 10th competency, which focuses on applying faith in practice. The ten social work competencies are:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
 - a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional code of ethics as appropriate to the context.
 - b. use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations.
 - c. demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and oral, written, and electronic communication.
 - d. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
 - e. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.
2. Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice
 - a. advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels; and
 - b. engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
3. Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice
 - a. demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels; and
 - b. demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences
4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
 - a. apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs; and

- b. identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.
- 5. Engage in Policy Practice
 - a. use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services; and
 - b. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
- 6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies; and
 - b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies
- 7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies; and
 - b. demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan
- 8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - a. engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals;
 - b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies
- 9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - a. select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes; and
 - b. critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- 10. Apply Christian Faith Development Principles to Inform and Guide Competent, Professional and Ethical Practice
 - a. understand the importance of demonstrating cultural competence when applying faith development principles in practice

ACCREDITATION

In the spring of 2007, the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE) granted the Social Work Department at Messiah full, independent accreditation. Previously, the Department was accredited in collaboration with Temple University. The Department was reaccredited by the CSWE in 2019 for an additional eight years. Graduates of the Messiah University Social Work

Department are eligible to apply for advanced standing, which reduces the number of credits required to obtain a master's degree.

BSW CURRICULUM

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Messiah University's BSW curriculum is designed to align with the Department's educational goals and objectives and to fulfill CSWE's competency standards. Students must successfully complete all the required courses to graduate. Further information on the curriculum may be found at: [Social Work Curriculum](#).

Social Work Major requirements (see course requirements below)	70
General Education requirements	31
<u>Electives</u>	<u>22</u>
Total credits	123

SOCIAL WORK MAJOR (70 CREDITS)

- SOWK 099 Professionalism in Social Work (1)
- SOWK 120 Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare (3)
- SOWK 221 Human Behavior in the Social Environment (3)
- SOWK 250 Social Work Practice with Individuals (3)
- SOWK 251 Field Experience: Social Work Practice with Individuals (1)
- SOAN 356 Social Inequality (3)
- SOWK 360 Social Work Practice with Families (3)
- SOWK 361 Field Experience: Social Work Practice with Families (1)
- SOWK 372 Social Work Practice with Groups (4)
- SOWK 382 Topics in Social Work (3)
- SOWK 385 Introduction to Research in Social Work (3)
- SOWK 420 Social Welfare Policy and Social Change (3)
- SOWK 475 Social Work Practice with Communities and Organizations (3)
- SOWK 476 Field Experience: Social Work Practice with Communities and Organizations (1)
- SOWK 484 Preparations for Field Practice (1)
- SOWK 485 Seminar in Social Work Practice (3) SOWK 490 Field Practice in Social Work (12)
- SOAN 101 Introduction to Sociology (3)
- PSYC 101 Introduction to Psychology (3)
- HIST 142 US History Survey Since 1865 (3)
- BIO 158 Human Biology (4)
- STAT 269 Introductory Statistics (3)
- ECON 110, 117, or 120 Economics (3)

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT POLICIES

SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

As a CSWE-accredited program, Messiah University's Social Work Program adheres to the university's [Community Covenant](#) and the ethical standards of the profession outlined in the [NASW Codes of Ethics](#), as well as Messiah's BSW Program [Goodness of Fit policy](#) (see Appendix A), when evaluating the suitability of social work students for the profession. Below are guidelines and examples of professionalism for a social work student:

CLASSROOM LEARNING

The student will...

- Adhere to assignment and project deadlines.
- Check CANVAS announcements and emails regularly, as this is the primary means of communication within the Department of Social Work.
- Complete assigned readings and preparation activities for class.
- Stay awake, alert, and engaged during learning activities and discussions.
- Refrain from using electronic communication (email, text messaging, phone calls, etc.) during class/practicum sessions unless otherwise approved by the professor
- Seek constructive feedback
- Arrive at class, meetings, or placement on time and leave when scheduled
- Inform faculty or field instructors ahead of time if you are going to be absent
- Be responsive to classroom and agency expectations
- Interact appropriately with peers, faculty, agency staff, and clients
- Contribute equally to the group process in conjunction with his/her team members

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The student will...

- Advocate for the rights of all clients.
- Maintain confidentiality for clients (see confidentiality section below).
- Take appropriate actions to ensure the safety of clients, oneself, and others.
- Provide timely, empathetic, competent, and professional care for clients.
- Communicate client care truthfully, promptly, and accurately.
- Actively promote high moral and ethical principles and accept responsibility for personal actions.
- Pursue lifelong learning and professional development to enhance excellence in social work practice.
- Demonstrate cultural competence and foster an environment that respects human rights, values, and diverse cultural and spiritual beliefs.

- Collaborate in all reasonable ways with academic faculty and clinical staff to maintain a professional environment and promote high-quality social work practice.
- Practice social work only at a level for which one is adequately trained.
- Avoid any deliberate actions or omissions in academic or practical settings that could harm oneself, faculty, staff, clients, or others.
- Refrain from using alcoholic beverages or substances that impair judgment in academic and practice settings.
- Take responsibility for mental health needs to promote personal wellbeing, create an optimal learning environment, and ensure quality care for clients.
- Seek personal treatment and support for access to rehabilitation concerning substance abuse and mental or physical health issues.
- Uphold school policies and regulations regarding academic and clinical performance while recognizing the right to challenge and critique rules and regulations in accordance with departmental and school grievance procedures.
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Participate in successful conflict resolution when necessary

CONFIDENTIALITY

The student will...

- Maintain confidentiality of all clinical, health, or personal information obtained in clinical or practicum environments
- Maintain confidentiality regarding student records
- Sign and/or adhere to all social work related “Confidentiality Statements,” including confidentiality statements outlined in course syllabi
- Remove all identifiable information from all evidence/artifacts posted electronically

COMMUNICATION

The student will...

- Communicate respectfully and formally with peers, faculty, staff, and practice professionals
- Communicate the need for classroom/clinical accommodations to the professor at the beginning of each semester
- Discuss issues only with a person involved in the issue or in consultation with appropriate personnel
- Respond in a timely manner to faculty, practicum instructors, and the Department administrative assistant

COMPETENCE

The student is expected to...

- Earn a major GPA in all SOWK-designated courses of 2.7 or higher and a cumulative 2.5 GPA or higher (Please see Academic Policies Specific to Social Work on page 16.).

- Develop competencies addressed in each class through course assignments and build on competencies developed throughout the major
- Gain full competence in each of the nine competency areas identified by CSWE and gain full competency for the tenth competency related to faith development identified by the Messiah University Department of Social Work
- Perform clinical skills based on appropriate training
- Demonstrate thinking and clinical judgment in classroom, simulation, and practicum experiences
- Demonstrate competence in writing skills (APA format, grammatically correct, logical idea development, proofreading)

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS

The student will...

- Communicate directly with the individual involved in the conflict
- Reflect respect, integrity, and care in all forms of communication
- Seek assistance in resolving the situation by using the proper chain of command (instructor, course coordinator, dept. chair, school dean)
- Call campus security 717-691-60050 or “9-1-1” in cases of imminent danger
- Report cases of sexual assault or harassment, verbal/physical threat, or actual violence directly to the practicum supervisor and to campus security or the Upper Allen Police Dept. (The student is also expected to notify the course professor and the Department chair ASAP)

SOCIAL MEDIA

The student will...

- Demonstrate professional and ethical behavior when using social media
- Maintaining confidentiality and adhering to social work ethics
- Refrain from using clients’ names (any identifier including initials, agency name, etc.) and personal information in any way
- Refrain from stating personal opinions as being endorsed by the University.
- Refrain from disclosing confidential information about the University, its employees, or its students.
- Refrain from using information and conducting activities that may violate Messiah University's academic or handbook policies or may violate local, state, or federal laws and regulations

If students identify themselves as Messiah University students on social media, it should be clear that any views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the institution. Messiah University does not tolerate content from students that is defamatory, harassing, libelous, or hostile to a reasonable academic or work environment. Social media can be used to assess student behavior.

PROCEDURES FOR ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

Social work students who have declared a major in social work will be expected to apply to the Messiah University Social Work Program. 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.

Students will follow a four-step process for admission into the social work Department. Applications are due at the beginning of the spring semester of the sophomore year, and instructions can be found on Messiah University's website at [Application to the Major](#) under the "Social Work Program Information" drop-down menu. This information is also available under the "[Admission to Major](#)" module in the BSW Program Information Canvas site.

STEP 1: DECLARATION OF MAJOR

A declaration of social work as a major is made by formally completing the required paperwork requesting the social work major and submitting the necessary [forms to the Office of the Registrar](#). Students may declare a social work major as part of the admissions process upon acceptance 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:
 - 1) SOWK 099 Professionalism
 - 2) SOWK 120 Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare
 - 3) SOWK 221 Human Behavior in the Social Environment
 - 4) SOWK 250 Social Work Practice with Individuals
 - 5) 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 the "[Admission to Major](#)" module in the BSW Program Information Canvas site

for instructions on the written statement or the website under [Social Work Program Information](#).

Applications are to be completed and submitted by the first Monday in February to the Department's administrative assistant.

STEP 3: REVIEW OF THE SUBMITTED APPLICATION AND WRITTEN STATEMENT

The Admission Committee includes at least two Community Advisory Board (CAB) members (see Appendix B), the Department Chair, and the Field Director. The committee will review the submitted applications using the Admission Committee Worksheet. Please refer to the "[Admission to Major](#)" module in the BSW Program Information Canvas site to review the Admission Committee Worksheet, or click on Procedures for Admission to the Major on the website under [Social Work Program Information and Handbooks](#).

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 the "[Admission to Major](#)" module in the BSW Program Information Canvas site or click on Procedures for Admission to the Major on the website under [Social Work Program Information and Handbooks](#) 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.

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS PROJECTS

Students enrolled in Messiah University's Honors Program can fulfill their senior honors project requirement by taking an approved Department Honors course. Students interested in departmental honors projects typically undertake independent research with the support of the social work faculty during their senior year. However, the planning process should start in the Fall semester of their junior year. Departmental Honors consists of four to six credits completed over two semesters, at a pace of one to four credits per semester. Only grades A and B will carry credit. If the honors work is of such high quality as to merit a grade A, the student will graduate with honors in their major field. Graduation with honors in a discipline is recognized at Commencement and is noted on the student's diploma. Only senior students are eligible to participate in Department Honors courses.

ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO

Students will utilize Exxat, an experiential education management system, to manage their electronic portfolios throughout their coursework in the Department of Social Work. Enrollment in the Exxat membership occurs during SOWK 251, accompanied by a one-time course fee. Developing an electronic portfolio provides students with opportunities to collect materials that showcase their experiences and demonstrate their mastery of social work competencies, ethics, and professionalism. The electronic portfolio will be evaluated as part of the SOWK 485 course requirements. Students are expected to retain course syllabi, competency assignments from each social work course, and other documents that demonstrate their social work competence, ethical behavior, and professionalism. Students are responsible for saving the necessary materials for the electronic portfolio at the end of each semester.

WRITING EXPECTATIONS

Writing assignments are required to meet university standards for organization, grammar, syntax, and mechanics. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and adhere to the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition format for margins, citations, and references. Students must purchase and refer to the most current Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association for a thorough explanation and guide to all types of documentation.

BSW SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL

Every social work student must understand and follow the relevant policies outlined in the Messiah University Field Education Manual before enrolling in SOWK learning experience courses. The Manual is accessible on the Messiah University website and the BSW Program Information Canvas site under the “Field Education and Forms” module.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING

When a student is to leave for a semester-long study abroad program, they are expected to inform the Department of Social Work at the beginning of the semester prior to their semester abroad. If a student plans to leave on a cross-cultural trip, they are expected to inform the Department of Social Work at least four weeks prior to their departure. This communication is necessary to locate and contact the student if necessary while they are away for Departmental reasons. For all study abroad and cross-cultural trips, students must inform the Department of Social Work of their departure date and destination.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE POLICY

Professional conferences held throughout the year offer a platform for students to network and engage with the field of Social Work and various professional organizations. Social Work faculty share information about upcoming conferences and organize student attendance to encourage participation in these professional events and workshops. Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from the conferences and accommodations during their stay. They are also encouraged to volunteer at conferences to help offset attendance fees.

POLICY RELATED TO NOT OFFERING COURSE CREDIT FOR LIFE OR WORK EXPERIENCE

The Social Work major does not grant students course credit for life experience or prior work experience. This policy is established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and therefore, the Department of Social Work prohibits offering course credit for life or prior work experience. Additionally, the Department cannot determine equivalency between life/work experiences and Social Work courses or practicum experiences. The Department also cannot assess competency development through life experience or prior work experience.

TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY FOR FIELD EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK COURSES

Field Education Courses: Field education courses (SOWK 251, SOWK 361, SOWK 372, SOWK 476, and SOWK 490) cannot be transferred from other institutions and must be completed at Messiah University.

Social Work Practice Courses: Transfer credits for social work practice courses and other CSWE competency-based courses will only be accepted from CSWE-accredited or candidacy baccalaureate programs. All transfer requests require review by the Department Chair and must meet institutional transfer credit requirements, including a grade of C+ or higher.

Review Process: The Department Chair evaluates course equivalency by reviewing syllabi, learning objectives, and alignment with CSWE competencies. Courses not in Messiah's transfer equivalency database require additional review.

ACADEMIC POLICIES SPECIFIC TO THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

Social Work students must meet the following specific requirements for graduation. They are required to maintain a minimum GPA of 2.7 in their major, a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5, and a SOWK course grade of 2.3 or higher. Any student who does not achieve a grade of C+ or better in any SOWK course must retake the course and earn a higher grade. Faculty may implement a remediation process for students not meeting these expectations while enrolled in the major. The procedures for managing these situations are similar to those for addressing concerns related to student professional performance and are outlined below. Faculty members concerned about a student's professional performance should request a conference with other Social Work faculty to discuss the issues.

The following procedure will be followed:

1. Faculty will meet with the student to develop a plan to address the concerns. The actions outlined in the plan can include (but are not limited to) notifying the student of difficulty, presenting recommendations and plans for remedial action to the student, and creating a contract with the student that specifies the corrective action, signed by all parties (i.e., the student and faculty).

- In some cases, the student may be recommended for dismissal from the Department of Social Work as part of the professional performance review.
- 2. The faculty will meet with the student to present the recommended written action plan.
- 3. The student may appeal the decision by submitting a written proposal to the Chair of the Department of Social Work within 10 days.
- 4. If there is no satisfactory resolution, the student can further appeal to the school dean.

MESSIAH UNIVERSITY GOOD MORAL CHARACTER AND INFRACTIONS

Students are expected to maintain academic and disciplinary records that reflect behavior consistent with the “Community Covenant of Messiah University.” If a student is involved in any violation of University or Departmental Policy, they must notify the Chairperson of the Department of Social Work to discuss the incident. When a student participates in a university hearing, and after the completion of the student’s appeal procedures, both the Academic Office and the Student Life Office may deem disciplinary action necessary. These offices are expected to inform the student’s advisor and/or the Chairperson of the Social Work Department about the students involved in the violation. Besides the actions taken by the University, the Messiah University Social Work Chair and/or the Department of Social Work are responsible for reviewing reported incidents and determining the appropriate course of action for the student involved. If, in the judgment of the Department Chair and/or the Department of Social Work, a student’s academic or disciplinary record shows a significant disregard for the expectations of Social Work student conduct, that student will not be approved for admission to, or progression within, the Social Work major. Eligibility for entrance and continued enrollment in the Social Work major will be revoked immediately for behavior contrary to the Code of Ethics.

Additionally, students found to be ineligible to continue in the Social Work major must withdraw immediately (or will be withdrawn) from the major. An “F” may be assigned if the student withdraws after the final date for withdrawal in the semester. Any student deemed by the Chair and/or the Department of Social Work as failing to meet the established standards for Social Work students may appeal this decision through the appeals process outlined by the Social Work Department.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR PROBATION AND DISMISSAL

Behavioral infractions listed below for which Social Work students have been found responsible by the University will be reported to the Department Chair by the student and/or the student’s advisor. Social Work faculty will review reported incidents and determine a course of action for the student involved.

Reportable infractions include:

1. Any violation of the Academic Integrity Policy published in the current *Messiah University Student Handbook*. Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy include (but may not be

limited to) the following offenses: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, computer offenses, and unfair advantage.

2. A finding of responsibility by the Messiah University disciplinary process or an arrest by an off-campus police agency for any of the following offenses:

- Underage drinking
- Discriminatory behavior: racial and/or gender
- Harassment behavior: abusive and/or sexual
- Personal dishonesty: stealing and/or theft of services
- Possession and/or use of illegal drugs
- Campus possession of university-banned weapons (ex., Firearms)
- Willful destruction of property
- Initiating bomb scares and/or false fire alarms
- Other incidents as identified by the Dean of Students

PROCEDURES FOR DISMISSAL FROM THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT FOR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

The Department of Social Work follows procedures for dismissing students due to academic performance that are clearly stated in the *Messiah University Academic Catalog*. Students are informed of these policies during student meetings, class discussions, and review of policies contained in the *Messiah University Student Handbook*, *Messiah University Academic Catalog*, and review of the *Department of Social Work Student Handbook* at the beginning stages of their journey at Messiah and in the Social Work major. The expectation to know, understand, and follow departmental policies is outlined in every Social Work course syllabus. Additionally, course assignments focus on reviewing these policies in introductory Social Work classes and practicum courses.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR APPEALS OF SUSPENSION OR DISMISSAL

If the student has previously attained conditional or full acceptance to the major or is currently in a practicum placement, any violations that result in disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion will undergo immediate review by the Chair of the Department of Social Work and other relevant faculty to determine the appropriate action (suspension or expulsion leads to immediate action for a student in learning experiences). If the student has not applied for formal admission, the admissions committee will take disciplinary action into account during evaluation.

A student who fails to follow departmental and university behavioral expectations will jeopardize admission to and continuation of the social work major. Social Work faculty are responsible for determining compliance with this policy and may consider specific circumstances of student violations, including a student's timely self-report of the violation and any remedial efforts made by the student.

If the Department determines that a student's behavior warrants suspension or termination from the major, the student will receive written notice of the decision within 10 days of the departmental meeting. The Department Chair will notify the Dean of the School of Business, Education, and Social Sciences of any decision to terminate a student from the Department. Additionally, the Department Chair will coordinate with the registrar's office to remove the student from any Social Work courses, and the field coordinator will contact any practicum placements to address placement concerns. Any student deemed by the Social Work faculty as failing to meet departmental policies or who has been terminated from the Social Work major may appeal within ten days of the Social Work faculty's decision to the Chair of the Department of Social Work, who shall render a final written determination within ten days of receiving the appeal. Students who are dissatisfied with the decision may appeal to the Dean of the School of Business, Education, and Social Sciences within 5 days of the Department's written determination.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISING

Overview

The Department of Social Work provides comprehensive advising services to support students' academic success and professional development. Advising in the BSW program includes academic advising (addressing curriculum and degree requirements) and professional advising (preparing for post-graduation entry into the social work profession). All advising services in the Department are provided by social work faculty members who are qualified, credentialed social workers.

Distinction Between Academic and Professional Advising

Academic Advising addresses curriculum planning, course selection and sequencing, understanding degree requirements (major and general education), academic policies and procedures, academic progress monitoring, academic performance enhancement, and connections to university academic support resources. Academic advising ensures students understand graduation requirements, general education (QuEST) requirements, major requirements, prerequisite courses, and academic standing.

Professional Advising focuses on post-graduation preparation for entry into the social work profession. This includes career counseling, career development guidance, professional coaching, field education support, licensing preparation, interviewing tips, preparation of career materials (resumes, portfolios), facilitating networking and informational interviews, guidance for research presentations or publications at professional conferences, professional development resources, and employment placement assistance.

Faculty Advisor Assignment

All social work students are assigned a faculty advisor from the Department of Social Work upon declaring or being admitted to the major. This faculty advisor provides both academic and professional advising throughout the student's academic journey.

Academic Advising Responsibilities

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities: Academic advisors understand QuEST (general education) requirements, major requirements, academic policies and procedures, and how to apply them to student circumstances. Advisors help students set academic goals aligned with life goals, encourage students to improve academic performance and pursue academic challenges, and assist with course scheduling. Advisors monitor students' academic progress, promote good academic work, and refer students to appropriate university resources (e.g., Engle Center, Writing Center, Financial Aid, Office of Academic Accessibility, Career and Professional Development Center). Advisors encourage students to apply for scholarships and awards and evaluate the advising system to strengthen the advising process.

Student Responsibilities: Students take full ownership of all academic decisions, with advisors assisting by presenting options and identifying resources. Students prepare for advising sessions and bring appropriate materials, contact advisors and make appointments when assistance is needed, and follow through on actions identified during advising sessions. Students clarify personal values, abilities, interests, and goals during their time at Messiah, become knowledgeable about and adhere to institutional policies and requirements, and review eligibility requirements for scholarships and awards. Students evaluate advisors and the advising system when requested.

Professional Advising Services

Professional advising in the Department of Social Work is provided exclusively by social work program faculty members. Professional advising addresses:

- **Career Counseling and Development:** Faculty provide individualized career counseling to help students identify career interests within social work, explore various social work practice settings and populations, and develop career goals aligned with their values and strengths.
- **Field Education Support:** The Field Education Director and faculty advisors provide guidance on field placement selection, professional behavior expectations, integration of classroom learning with practice, and development of professional competencies.
- **Licensing Preparation:** Faculty provide information and guidance about the Licensed Bachelor Social Worker (LBSW) examination process in Pennsylvania, including application procedures, study resources, and examination preparation strategies.
- **Graduate School Preparation:** Faculty assist students in identifying appropriate MSW programs, preparing application materials, developing personal statements, securing letters of recommendation, and understanding advanced standing opportunities.
- **Professional Materials Development:** Faculty provide feedback on resumes, cover letters, professional portfolios, and LinkedIn profiles to ensure students present themselves professionally to potential employers and graduate programs.
- **Networking and Professional Connections:** Faculty facilitate connections to alumni, field instructors, Community Advisory Board members, and other social work professionals for informational interviews and networking opportunities.

- **Professional Development:** Faculty guide students toward relevant professional conferences, workshops, continuing education opportunities, and involvement in professional organizations (NASW, NACSW).
- **Employment Placement Assistance:** Faculty provide guidance on job search strategies, interview preparation, salary negotiation, and employment decision-making.

Appreciative Advising Framework

The Department of Social Work employs an Appreciative Advising framework for both academic and professional advising. This strengths-based approach aligns with social work values and uses a six-phase model:

1. Disarm – Create a positive first impression and a welcoming environment
2. Discover – Build rapport and learn about students' strengths and interests
3. Dream – Elicit hopes and professional aspirations
4. Design – Partner with students to co-create plans to achieve goals
5. Deliver – Support students in executing plans and provide encouragement
6. Don't Settle – Encourage students to reach their full potential

Advisors may not go through all six phases during each session, and phases may not always be employed sequentially. This framework empowers students and helps them develop an appreciative mindset that extends beyond advising contexts.

Advising Service Formats

Academic and professional advising in the BSW program is delivered through multiple formats:

Faculty-Initiated Advising: Faculty advisors initiate contact with advisees at least once per semester prior to registration periods. Students receive email notifications to schedule advising appointments for course planning and registration.

Student-Initiated Advising: Students may request advising appointments at any time throughout the semester by contacting their faculty advisor via email or through the department office. Faculty are responsive to student-initiated requests for both academic and professional guidance.

Open Office Hours: Faculty maintain weekly office hours and have an open-door policy. Students may drop in during these hours for brief advising questions without a scheduled appointment.

Field Seminars: Professional advising occurs during field education seminars where students discuss career development, professional identity formation, and preparation for professional practice.

How to Access Advising Services

Students can access advising services by:

- Responding to faculty-initiated emails for registration advising
- Emailing their assigned faculty advisor to request an appointment

- Visiting during office hours
- Contacting the department office (717-766-2511 ext. 6073) for assistance connecting with their advisor
- Attending class sessions where advising is integrated

Additional Resources

Students are encouraged to utilize the following resources in conjunction with faculty advising:

- **Career and Professional Development Center** – for resume review, interview preparation, job search assistance
- **Messiah University Academic Advising website** – for university-wide advising philosophy and resources
- **Social Work Program Information Canvas site** – for advising forms, resources, and information
- **BSW Handbook for Field Education** – for field-specific advising information
- **NASW PA Chapter** – for professional organization information and licensure resources
- **Social Work Club and Phi Alpha** – for peer support and professional development opportunities

Questions about advising policies should be directed to your faculty advisor or the Department Chair.

STUDENT SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS

SOCIAL WORK CLUB

The purpose of the Social Work Club is to encourage cohesion and identity within the Social Work profession through community service, establishing professional contacts, and encouraging one another in Christ. The club sponsors campus-wide activities, service projects, and other events that fulfill its purpose. Students declared as Social Work majors are considered members of the Social Work Club. Non-majors are also welcome and encouraged to be active participants in club activities. For more information, students can refer to the constitution and bylaws of the Social Work Club.

The goals of the Social Work Club are to:

- Promote Social Work on the Messiah University campus as well as into the surrounding communities
- Educate Social Work students about current events and trends in the Social Work profession
- Encourage interaction among the Messiah University Social Work majors
- Promote diversity and raise awareness of issues including racism, ethnicity, and culture
- Implement at least two events each semester on the Messiah University campus to promote awareness and education of the Social Work profession and the issues that surround Social Work
- Assist the community through at least two service projects each semester (totaling 350 collective community service hours per semester)
- Attend professional conferences (on availability) to educate ourselves about the Social Work profession and to have contact with experienced Social Work professionals
- Hold member meetings at least once per month in order to support cohesion of club members
- Receive prayer requests from Social Work students and professors
- Work collectively with other Messiah University organizations to organize activities promoting issues surrounding diversity

PHI ALPHA HONOR SOCIETY

Phi Alpha is the official Lambda Psi Chapter of the National Honor Society of Social Work. Phi Alpha recognizes students for their academic achievement and offers opportunities for professional growth through club events and service projects. Members of Phi Alpha participate in service projects to demonstrate their commitment to the core values outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics.

The goals of Phi Alpha are to:

- Recognizes and promotes scholastic achievement in an undergraduate Social Work Department that is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
- Encourages objectivity and awareness of current developments and practices in the various fields of Social Work
- Develops active communication and positive working relations among Social Work Departments, professional Social Workers, and the general public
- Stimulates interest in preparing for a career in Social Work
- Furthers research and study in Social Work
- Recognizes professional Social Workers and others whose service, contributions, and leadership are held in esteem

Eligibility Requirement

- Admitted to the Social Work major
- Achieved sophomore status
- Completed 8 semester hours or 12 quarter hours of required Social Work courses
- Ranked in the top 35% of their class and achieved an overall grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale
- Invitation for induction will be offered to students during their sophomore and/or junior years

Subsequent to induction, each member is required to preserve active status by maintaining the National minimum requirement and the local Chapter requirements listed above, in addition to the following expectations:

- A. Attend all general meetings of Phi Alpha
- B. Maintain active membership to The Social Work Club
- C. Participate in all Phi Alpha activities and service projects

Membership shall be available to all eligible persons who meet the requirements listed above without regard to age, gender, color, race, creed, ethnic or national origin, political or sexual orientation, or disability. Qualified persons may be inducted into membership in the spring semester for the following year. Any member may be expelled from membership for reasons of academic or personal conduct unbecoming of a student of Social Work, by the three-fourths vote of the chapter, after the Executive Committee has made a thorough investigation, and the member so charged has been granted an impartial hearing before the Executive Committee. Dismissal from the Social Work Department or the University is cause for automatic recommendation for expulsion.

For more information, students may refer to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Phi Alpha National Honor Society.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

At the beginning of each academic year, or as a condition for changing one's major to Social Work, every Social Work major is required to review the handbook thoroughly, and then sign and submit the *Statement of Understanding Form* to the Department of Social Work Office by the second week of the semester, or two weeks after declaring Social Work as your major.

Student Name (Print) _____

As a Social Work student...

1. I understand that I am expected to adhere to the values, ethics, and standards of Messiah University, the Department of Social Work, and the profession of Social Work.
2. I commit to seeking an increased understanding of the Christian faith.
3. I understand that it is the responsibility of social work students to be intentional about developing the competencies needed to practice social work.
4. I understand that the Department of Social Work and the profession expect professional behavior at all times.
5. I understand that even if accepted into the Social Work major at Messiah University, the Department faculty or the University may deem my professional development unsatisfactory. In such cases, the Department has the right and responsibility to request a reevaluation of my acceptance and suitability for the major.

My signature below indicates that I understand and agree to the expectations of a Social Work major and that I have read, understood, and agreed to abide by all policies and guidelines established by Messiah University and the Messiah University Department of Social Work. My signature also indicates that I authorize the Department to regularly review my progress within the major and evaluate my academic and disciplinary records to monitor my eligibility for progression in the Social Work major. I understand that my eligibility to continue in the Social Work major is contingent upon satisfactorily meeting all stated expectations and criteria for progression within the major.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX A: GOODNESS OF FIT POLICY

As a CSWE-accredited program, The Messiah University Social Work Program adheres to the University's Community Covenant and profession's ethical standards as outlined in the [NASW Codes of Ethics](#) in evaluating social work students' fit for the social work profession. This policy applies to students' ethical responsibilities in the following areas as stated in the NASW Code of Ethics:

1. [Responsibilities to clients](#)
2. [Responsibilities to colleagues](#)
3. [Responsibilities in practice settings](#)
4. [Responsibilities as professionals](#)
5. [Responsibilities to the social work profession](#)
6. [Responsibilities to the broader society](#)

Process:

1. Students will review and sign the Goodness of Fit form to acknowledge acceptance of the Goodness of Fit Policy.
2. The student's advisor will document and communicate concerns to the student and the Department Chair in accordance with the NASW's ethical responsibilities to colleagues under [sections 2.08 Impairment of Colleagues, 2.09 Incompetency of Colleagues, and 2.10 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues](#).
3. The student will develop a formal action plan to address the concern (s) with the support of the social work advisor and Department Chair. Failure to follow the action plan may result in dismissal from the social work program.
4. The Social Work Program will follow Messiah University's policy on academic probation, eligibility, suspension, and dismissal as stated in the [Academic Policies](#).

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Goodness of Fit Policy for Messiah's BSW Program.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

**Messiah University Social Work
BSW & MSW
Community Advisory Board Guidelines**

Mission of the Community Advisory Board

To promote a reciprocal and ongoing relationship between Messiah BSW and MSW Programs and members of the practice community as part of the process of continuous evaluation of educational goals and objectives, curriculum, and field practice to enhance the quality of baccalaureate and master social work education and practice at Messiah University.

Community Advisory Board Guidelines:

1. Role of Community Advisory Board: The Community Advisory Board will function as an advisory body to the Messiah University BSW & MSW Programs. The Board would not possess any form of authority or legal responsibility related to the Programs but would offer consultation on curriculum and issues relating to program policy and practices. The Board is not a fiduciary body and will not be involved in financial transactions of any sort.
2. Community Advisory Board Membership: The Community Advisory Board will be composed of 12-16 members, including the Directors of the Messiah BSW & MSW Social Work Programs, the BSW & MSW Field Directors, four student representatives from the social work program (two from BSW & two from MSW), and 4-8 representatives from the practice community.

The Directors of the Social Work Program will appoint the Community Advisory Board representatives from the practice community. The Community Advisory Board, Social Work Faculty, and Messiah University Administration will generate suggestions for nominations of individuals to serve on the Community Advisory Board. Every effort will be made to enrich the Board's work by actively seeking members who reflect racial, cultural, gender, and ethnic diversity and diversity in fields of practice.

3. **Meeting Schedule:** The Community Advisory Board will meet once each semester. Written notice of the meetings and the agenda will be provided to all members at least two weeks in advance. Minutes from all meetings and the proposed date for the next meeting will be distributed within 30 days of the meeting.
4. **Decision-Making Process:** Decisions for the Community Advisory Board and all subcommittees will be made by majority vote of those present. A quorum of at least three community representatives, in addition to the Social Work Program Directors and Field Coordinators, will be required for a vote.
5. **Amendments:** Proposed amendments to these guidelines may be made by any member of the Board and submitted to the Social Work Program Directors. Proposed amendments can be made at any time and must be submitted to members of the Board for their consideration at least two weeks prior to the meeting in which they will be considered.
6. **Expectations for Community Advisory Board Member:**
 - Provide feedback concerning the BSW & MSW curriculum and policies.
 - Participate in accreditation activities as appropriate (i.e., meeting as a small group with site visitors to discuss the program either in the early stages of earning accreditation or during the reaffirmation process; discuss annual program outcomes and make recommendations for improving outcomes as appropriate).
 - Support the field education program by providing practicum opportunities or networking with colleagues to provide practicum opportunities.
 - Be ambassadors for the BSW & MSW program.
 - Attend Community Advisory Board meetings.

Adopted September 9, 2024