

Policy related to an accelerated Social Work degree

There are times when a student may request to take a path to complete the social work degree in less than the traditional four year plan outlined in the handbook. The department has developed additional three and two year plans depending on when a student comes into the major or depending on how many college credits a first year student brings when entering college. For example, a student may switch majors during the first or second year at Messiah or a student may transfer to Messiah during a student's first or second year at College. Generally these change of major students or transfer students come with enough credits to graduate in less than four years. Allowing students to move through the major on a three or two year plan may require students to take courses together that are not allowed under the four year plan and therefore need approval from the department chair.

The accepted path for social work students is to take SOWK120 and SOWK099 their first year and then take SOWK250 and SOWK251 the second year in the Major, and follow the four year plan the remaining two years. Students who request to deviate from this plan (complete the major in two or three years) generally need to take both intro classes and upper level courses at the same time. For example, many times it would be necessary for students to take SOWK120 and SOWK250 simultaneously to be able to complete a two or three year plan. Students wanting to complete a two or three year plan must receive preliminary approval from the social work department chair. Many times this decision needs to be made with limited information (not having clear evidence of a student's ability to handle a preliminary field placement, SOWK251 as an example). Therefore, if additional information is received that provides evidence that an accelerated plan is not advisable, students may not be allowed proceed on an accelerated rate through the major or may be required to withdraw from the advanced courses. Additionally, the department chair will notify students through email when students may be required to revise their plan or drop courses. Students who are on an accelerated plan through the major may also be placed on conditional status until the department has sufficient evidence that the student can handle an accelerated plan or when a student successfully completes the application to the major process.

Decisions related to how a student progresses through the major are made at the discretion of the department chair in consultation with the department. Decisions are determined by the student's academic and professional readiness for social work. This may include but not limited to a demonstration of maturity and professionalism required for preliminary placements, any professional or behavioral issues identified by the department that may inhibit a student's ability to progress in the major, or deficiencies in competency and specific dimension development necessary for professional success. Additional issues that may impact the decision include academic and behavioral standards outlined in the social work department handbook.