

Department of Social Work
School of Social Sciences and Education

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Program Description

The social work profession is grounded in a commitment to serving vulnerable and oppressed populations and to advocating for public policies that promote social justice. The Department of Social Work offers the Master of Social Work (MSW) degree, which prepares students for advanced generalist social work practice. Graduates are prepared to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in fields such as mental health, physical health, family and child welfare, gerontology, corrections, juvenile justice, youth services, and substance abuse treatment. The program involves 60 semester units of academic work, a 960-hour internship, and a culminating experience.

The program consists of foundation and advanced level courses, in which students develop the knowledge, skills, and values of social work consistent with advanced generalist practice. Students may participate in the program on a fulltime or part-time basis. An advanced-standing option is available for students who have received a BSW from an accredited program within the last five years.

The mission of the California State University, Bakersfield, Department of Social Work, is to prepare students for social work practice and leadership at the advanced generalist level. Graduates possess the knowledge, values, and skills required to competently and ethically work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities using best practices. The Department is committed to improving social conditions in the Central Valley by promoting culturally responsive practice, social justice, and life-long learning.

The goals of the MSW program are:

1. To prepare advanced generalist social workers who identify with the social work profession and model the values and ethics of the profession.
2. To prepare graduates to continue their professional growth and development throughout their careers.
3. To prepare students for leadership roles in an interprofessional environment within the community.
4. To prepare advanced generalist social workers who are competent to engage in autonomous practice within the context of multiple systems and diverse environments, using a multidimensional perspective applicable across the lifespan.

5. To prepare advanced generalist social workers who use research knowledge and skills to evaluate their social work practice.
6. To prepare advanced generalist social workers to advocate for human rights and social and economic justice in the broader social environment.

Admission to the Program

Students who desire admission to the MSW program must complete an application for admission to both the university and to the department and must pay applicable fees. Students are admitted as a cohort once each year. Advanced-standing students join a cohort to complete the course of study in a logical sequence. Admission to the MSW program is based upon an overall evaluation of the applicant on several criteria, including: 1) intellectual and academic potential, 2) relevant human services experience, 3) leadership potential, and 4) quality of reference letters.

Essential Requirements

Applicants must meet the following requirements before the Admissions Committee will review their applications. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application file is complete.

1. Possession of a Bachelor's degree with a liberal arts foundation from a recognized college or university. For degrees earned in the United States, this means the degree must be from an institution that is accredited by one of the six regional accrediting associations.
2. A cumulative undergraduate GPA of at least 2.5 (on a four-point scale)
3. A completed University application form, which is obtainable from any CSU campus or CSU websites (www.csumentor.edu or www.csumentor.edu/admissionapp/grad_apply.asp).
4. A completed departmental application.
5. Official sealed copies of transcripts from all colleges attended.
6. A personal statement completed according to guidelines in the application.
7. Three letters of reference.
8. University application fee.
9. Computer literacy

Applicants who meet items 2 through 9 above will be evaluated for possible admission to the program. Applicants who do not yet have a bachelor's degree may be admitted as "conditional" graduate students and must submit proof of having completed their degrees before beginning the MSW program.

Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)

The California State University system requires all degree candidates to demonstrate upper division writing competency before the degree can be conferred. Applicants are required to meet the writing proficiency requirement prior to the end of the first semester in the MSW program. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of several ways:

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1. Be a graduate of a university in the California State University System after 1980.
2. Be a graduate of a university in the University of California System after 1980.
3. Receive a minimum score of 41 on the CBEST.
4. Receive a minimum score of 4.5 on the GRE.
5. Receive a minimum score of 4.5 on the GMAT.
6. Pass the Graduate Writing Assessment Exam (GWAR), which is given at the testing center on the CSUB campus.
7. Submit documentation of having completed a writing instruction course at another university at the upper division level prior to enrollment at CSUB. The course must be evaluated by the CSUB Department of English and found to meet the CSU writing requirement.
8. Be first author on an article published in a peer-reviewed journal.
9. Submit for review a copy of a master's thesis or project from another degree or credential.

Advanced Standing

Applicants who have graduated with a baccalaureate degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) may request advanced standing. These students follow an abbreviated Plan of Study involving waiver of Foundation courses. The following additional conditions must be met for advanced standing:

1. The student must have completed the Bachelor's degree in Social Work (BSW) within five years prior to admission to the graduate program.
2. The applicant must have an overall GPA of 3.0 for the baccalaureate degree.
3. All social work courses must have a grade of 3.0 or better. Courses with a grade of less than 3.0 will not be waived.

International Students

In addition to meeting the requirements for admission given above, international students must take TOEFL and have a score of 550 or higher (or 213 on the new conversion scale for the computer-based TOEFL exam).

Immigration Requirements for Licensure

On August 27, 1996, Governor Pete Wilson issued Executive Order W-135-96, which requested that the CSU and other state agencies implement "as expeditiously as reasonably practicable" the provision of The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRAWORA) of 1996 (P.L. 104-193). The Act, also known as the Welfare Reform Act, included provisions to eliminate eligibility for federal and state public benefits for certain categories of lawful immigrants as well as benefits for all illegal immigrants. Students who will require a professional or commercial license provided by a local, state, or federal government agency in order to engage in an occupation for which the CSU may be training them must meet the immigration requirements of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act to achieve licensure.

Accreditation

The MSW program at CSUB is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the national accrediting body in Social Work.

Life or Work Experience

In accordance with the standards of the Council on Social Work Education, it is the policy of the department not to grant academic credit for previous life or work experience at either the undergraduate or graduate level.

Criminal Background Check

A background check will be conducted on all applicants admitted into the MSW program. Conviction of a misdemeanor or felony may not preclude an applicant's acceptance into the program; however, admission into the MSW program does not guarantee acceptance by an agency for field education practicum. The law requires most agencies to conduct criminal background checks of all employees, interns, and volunteers. Thus, some agencies may not accept students for placement if they have criminal convictions, and limited choices for completing the required field education practicum could impede or even block the ability of such students to complete the MSW program. In addition, the California Board of Behavioral Sciences imposes certain restrictions on approval of professional licenses to practice clinical social work based on past criminal convictions. Please see the MSW Field Manual for additional information.

Requirements for Masters of Social Work (MSW) Degree

1. MSW courses provide two levels of competencies, Foundation and Advanced. The following are required foundation courses:
 - a. SW 6000, 6100, 6200, 6300, 6400, 6410, 6420, 6430, 6440
 - b. SW 6500 (equals 320 hours of field experience incorporated with associated seminars)
2. Students in the MSW program take a series of advanced courses that are based on an advanced generalist model of social work practice. The following are required advanced courses:
 - a. SW 6160, 6260, 6360, 6460, 6470, 6590
 - b. SW 6560 and 6570 (equals 640 hours of field experience incorporated with associated seminars)
3. **Elective Course Work**

Students in the MSW program must take at least 2 elective courses (6 units) approved by the department. Students who received special funding may be required to take specific electives. Students may take additional electives. Electives that are not approved by the department curriculum committee will not count toward the graduation requirements. The following are elective courses:

 - a. SW 6610, 6620, 6630, 6640, 6650, 6660

4. **Field Practicum**

Field practicum is the signature pedagogy and an integral part of social work education. The field practicum experience provides an opportunity to integrate knowledge, skills, and values. Over the course of the program, students will complete a minimum of 960 clock hours in the field. Field Practicum may extend beyond the typical academic schedule. The field experience is guided by an individualized learning contract that students develop with their field instructors. As part of the Field Practicum, students also participate in a seminar where they practice the integration of knowledge, skills, and values. The Director of Field Education is responsible for this component of the curriculum. Every effort is made to place students in their home communities; however, there are circumstances when suitable placements may not be available in their home communities. When this occurs, students may be required to travel to other communities.

5. **Culminating Experience**

The CSU system requires a culminating experience for graduate education. The MSW culminating experience involves a project that integrates CSWE's core competencies. It is a synthesis of learning resulting in a project of value to the community. The final project must be submitted prior to graduation.

6. **Thesis**

The thesis counts as six (6) units. Students may substitute 6 thesis units for their required electives.

Advancement to Graduate Candidacy

Regular MSW students may be advanced to candidacy upon completion of the foundation curriculum, and advanced-standing students may be advanced to candidacy at the time of admission to the program. Advancement to graduate candidacy is based upon a formal review and recommendation by the faculty and approval by the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs.

Time for Completion

The MSW curriculum is structured so full-time students can complete the program in two years and part-time students can complete the program in three years. Students who do not successfully complete courses as scheduled may be delayed a year or more.

Degree Requirements

The University confers the MSW degree upon fulfillment of the following requirements:

1. Completion of all required course work according to an approved degree plan.
2. Completion of 960 hours of field experience and associated seminars.
3. Positive assessment of the culminating experience project (80% mean score of all categories).
4. Minimum grade point average of 3.0, with no grade less than a "C" (2.0 equivalent) in all courses taken to satisfy the requirements for the degree as specified in each student's Plan of Study.
5. CA law states that all requirements leading to the MSW degree must be completed within 7 years from first enrollment.