

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (M.S.W.)

Field Education Policies

Overview

Field instruction is the signature pedagogy of Social Work education. It is a learning experience in a professional setting that enables students to integrate and apply theory and knowledge in order to develop and practice skills prior to entering the workforce that align with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies. Field education is designed to provide students with hands-on experience in order to develop appropriate knowledge, value, skills, and professional identification. Placements are coordinated with social work agencies or institutions that work collaboratively with Fordham to plan individual learning opportunities. Fordham maintains relationships with many agencies and institutions nationally that offer a wide range of programs and settings.

Field Instruction Manual

Please note that all information shared on this Bulletin page are representing only some aspects of the Field Education process and expectations. This Bulletin is highlighting the primary areas in which students have the most questions. Please refer to the current Field Education Manual for all detailed specifics about Field Placement.

Field Practicum

The first Field practicum is completed in the Generalist/Foundation year. During the Generalist/Foundation Field year, students learn social work practice skills that are applicable to work with client systems (individual, family, and group) and organizations and communities. Generalist/Foundation year Field occurs over two semesters (for both on-campus and online students). Such considerations as current employment, past experience, hours of availability, and geography, along with agency requirements, are crucial in making foundation/generalist placement matches. The goal is to facilitate the learning of foundation-level skills that are transferable to all settings and all populations. Please note that the Generalist/Foundation year placement is assigned to you by the Field Department directly.

Specialist/Advanced year field is taken after completing and successfully passing the Generalist Field practicum. Students admitted into the Advanced Standing program are required to complete one full Specialist year Field practicum. In Specialist/Advanced Field, students apply skills learned in Generalist year to learning advanced practice skills with more complex clients and social policy/organizational systems. Specialist Field placements may involve direct practice with client systems; macro practice in administration, social policy and/or evaluation of practice; or a combination of direct and macro practice at the advanced level of learning in field. This placement process differs from Generalist/Foundation year placement where the Field placement coordinators work collaboratively with students to find a Specialist/Advanced year placement that coordinates with a student's preferences related to a particular setting and population where possible.

Agencies are requiring a variety of onboarding and clearances that must be completed prior to beginning a Field placement, which is generally dependent upon the site and type of training being received. This may include, but is not limited to, such items as a criminal background

check, a recent physical exam and/or certain tests or immunizations prior to placement. Students are notified in advance of any particular requirements related to their placement sites and should be ready to provide such information directly to the agency. Cooperation with these requirements is expected. In most instances, the costs of meeting these requirements are the responsibility of the student. Fordham does hold an agreement with Castlebranch to support students in providing a streamlined and protected way to submit and manage any documentation or clearances needed for sites/institutions. Students will be connected to this service when/if needed by the Field Education Department and prior to the placement year.

Foundation/Generalist Field Placement Planning

Students begin foundation/generalist field instruction during their first year of the program if enrolled in the two-year plan of study, or their second year if in the extended, three- to four-year plan of study. Students should always refer to their plan of study when registering.

If you are accepted as a full-time student, the Office of Admissions provides the link to the electronic field application planning forms in your acceptance information. If you begin the program part-time, you will attend a field planning meeting, and the link to the planning forms will be provided at that time.

Advanced/Specialist Field Placement Planning

Students are informed of the names of the coordinators with whom you will meet individually to discuss your interests and educational needs. The coordinator with whom you meet will be responsible for placing you. Students entering Fordham as advanced-standing students receive the link to their field planning form in their acceptance information. Once the student submits their form, a placement coordinator will contact them for an interview. Depending on their geographic location, advanced-standing M.S.W. students will participate in a placement interview in person, by phone, or via Zoom.

Field Placement Hours and Credits

Within the M.S.W. degree program, traditional students are required to participate in two field practicums. Advanced Standing students will be required to complete one field practicum. Students must complete a minimum of 950 hours of field total in both field practicums, though some placements may require hours that surpass that minimum. Generalist/Foundation year students will be required to complete 450 hours in a field placement and Specialist/Advanced Standing year students will be required to complete 500 hours. Students are expected to be in field placement a minimum of 16 hours per week. If you are a student seeking evening/weekend hours, please note you are required to be in field placement for a portion of the required hours during the workweek, and that must occur between the hours of 8am-8pm. Please note that students are expected to determine hours and a schedule in collaboration with the agency/institution. Please note that some sites and/or specialized placements may require specific hours and days and students agreeing to be placed at those sites are expected to fulfill that obligation to the agency and clients. Please note that participating in Field means that students will remain in placement for the entire academic term and are not allowed to end Field earlier than 2 weeks prior to the end of each semester/term. This is meant to ensure that students are fully able to meet all CSWE competencies, fulfill their commitment to the agency/institution and achieve the minimum number of Field hours

designated. Field advisement sessions, which are taken concurrently with Field placement do not hold any credit hours. Field placement accounts for 14 credit hours within the total credit hours of 62 accumulated for the M.S.W. degree.

Field Advisement Sessions

All students in field instruction are required to participate in Field Advisement sessions that run concurrently with each placement year. These sessions are mandatory and are considered part of field instruction and do factor into the final grade for Field each semester/term. Students indicate their time preference for these sessions each year when they register for courses. Students enrolled in the online M.S.W. program and the Fordham/Molloy hybrid option are also required to participate in an online Field Advisement sessions. These sessions meet 7 times over the course of the academic year. The Advisement Sessions offer students the opportunity to share experiences in the field and to further integrate course work and fieldwork. The Field Adviser facilitates the Field Advisement sessions and is the student's link to the field internship and the assigned supervisor for the placement site. Please note that certain placements require enrollment in specific advisement sessions, including but not limited to those students applying for Palliative Care placements and the Pipeline For Youth Health placements.

Student/Field Placement Match

Field Education Department staff and coordinators use the information students provide on their field application, along with a resume and initial interviews, either in person, by phone or via Zoom, to place students for their Generalist/Foundation and Specialist/Advanced year Field placements. Student applications are assigned to field placement coordinators as they are submitted and students are informed of the names of the coordinators with whom they will meet individually to discuss interests and educational needs. Once a coordinator has been assigned, a student will receive outreach from them and will begin the placement process for the upcoming Field year. Because students are assigned based on geographical area and placement year, students can expect to have a different placement coordinator in their Specialist/Advanced year from the individual they worked with in their Generalist/Foundation year. Please note the Field Advisor assigned to the Field Advisement sessions may also change from Generalist/Foundation year to Specialist/Advanced year.

Work/Study and Employment-Based Field Instruction

Some students are able to meet their field instruction requirements through the social service agency where they are currently employed. If this is an option, the student is asked to indicate this on the field application and submit a proposal for the field placement. In order to qualify, the student must be employed by the agency for at least six months prior to the start of the placement. The field instructor may not be your regular supervisor, must have at least two years post-M.S.W. experience, must be licensed in accordance with the regulations of the state where students will complete field placements, and meet other training requirements. The department will review all proposals for suitability and consult with the Field Director prior to approval for any applications that do not fully meet criteria. Please note that application does not indicate certainty that this placement will be approved. For all supervisors in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, Fordham does require the additional Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) certification. Field instructors can sign up for this course at Fordham or any other New York area schools that offer this course.

Stipend-Based Internships

Students placed in internships are designated as student interns due to the Field placement process being considered a training program and is not considered paid employment. Please refer here to the CSWE statement released in May 2022 regarding paid internships.

Many placements may have monetary stipends or scholarships attached and students may qualify for these based on criteria identified per site and/or via requirements indicated by Fordham University. This will be reviewed with the student during the placement process if the site qualifies or offers financial support.

Choices in the Placement Process

It is always the intent of the Field Education Department to work collaboratively with students to determine a Field placement setting that provides the best possible learning experience for each practicum year. It is important to note that while preferences are taken into account, the Generalist/Foundation year placement setting will be assigned by the Field Department directly. For Specialist/Advanced students, students will be able to express greater preference and selection regarding the setting in which they are placed and with the associated service population. Students generally interview with the agency during both years to ensure that the setting is a good fit for the student. Once a student has met with an agency/institution, a joint affiliation agreement regarding placement is made between Fordham and the site. Students should not contact agencies directly to arrange interviews until advised to participate in this process by your coordinator.

Field Instruction Grades

Field instruction is a year-long course and graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. At the end of the first semester, if the student is progressing well, a grade of In Progress (IP*) is given. Grades of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) are given upon completion of the course. The mid-year and final grades will only be entered when the field evaluation has been received. It is important to note that the mid-year grade of "IP*" does not change after a grade of "S" is received. The Field Education Department provides the student and field instructor with an evaluation tool for monitoring progress and learning needs. The field instructor also submits written evaluations to the school at the end of each semester. For specialized placements, additional evaluations may be provided as part of that placement process.

Absences from Field Placement

In field placement settings, students are permitted a maximum of three absences during the year for illness or other emergencies. These hours should still be made up at an alternate time agreed upon with the agency/institution to ensure the student stays on track with accumulation of hours. Students should plan ahead when entering their Field placement, as extended time off is not considered appropriate when committing to the agency and client population for the academic year. Students may have to delay or defer Field depending upon a scenario where extended time off is taken or being requested. Deferral or delaying Field may also affect a student's plan of study so it is imperative that consultations with the Field Department occur immediately if a student may need to interrupt Field placement for any reason.

If a situation occurs in which the student is ill for an extended period of time or another emergency requires a lengthier absence, the student must immediately consult with their Field Adviser and Field placement instructor/supervisor and obtain special approval from the Field Department to continue in Field for that current semester. For instances

that require lengthy absences for medical reasons, a student may apply for a Medical Leave of Absence with the Student Services Department.

Students who delay or are out of Field for more than one semester will be required to restart Field hours, regardless of the previous hours earned when an interruption or absence occurred. If students are out of the program for two or more semesters, they will have to reapply to the entire program and restart Field as part of that process.

Students are also required to be present in all Field Advisement sessions each practicum year. If more than two classes are missed, a student may risk failing Field. It is important to always stay in contact and share challenges in real-time with Field Advisors about any potential challenges known in advance.

If a student has any questions or encounters problems or emergent issues in field placement or with advisement sessions, they should contact and consult with the Field Adviser immediately. Field advisers consult directly with the Field Education Department should further intervention or guidance be needed.

Malpractice Insurance

As a student in field placement, you are covered by a malpractice policy. The cost for this policy is \$30 per year. The fee is charged to your account when you register for field instruction. This policy is only in effect during your internship hours. When you graduate and are no longer an intern, you may want to obtain your own liability policy. If you are a member of NASW, you are able to apply for liability insurance through its group plan.

Contact Us

We know that many questions or challenges may arise during the Field placement process and the placement teams assigned to our online and on-campus students are always willing to provide support and problem solving whenever needed.

All students can always feel free to contact the Field Department directly at gssfieldinstruction@fordham.edu and your email will be forwarded to the appropriate person who can best address your questions or needs. This email address is for both online and on-campus students to use.

If there are questions or concerns specifically related to the Online program, please also feel free to reach out directly to the online placement team at fieldeducation@onlinemsw.fordham.edu

For grievances or concerns, please direct these to the Director of Field Education, Christie Hunnicutt, at chunnicutt2@fordham.edu and/or the Associate Director of Field Education, Gwen Mitchell, at gmitchell4@fordham.edu

We look forward to working with you!