

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

Field Education Policies

Overview

Field instruction is the signature pedagogy of Social Work education. Under the supervision of an experienced social worker, MSW students apply classroom knowledge and theory to direct work with clients at their field placement. Through hands-on experiences, MSW students develop ethical and culturally responsive practice skills that align with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies.

All field placements are coordinated by Fordham's Field Education Department. Fordham maintains long-standing relationships with hundreds of agencies and institutions, nationally that offer a wide range of programs and settings.

Field Practicum

The traditional MSW program spans two academic years of study (part-time plans of study span more than two *calendar* years of study). The first academic year of study is referred to as the "Generalist" or "Foundation" Year. The second academic year of study is referred to as the "Specialist" or "Advanced" Year.

Generalist/Foundation Year

In the Generalist/Foundation Year, within the Field Practicum, students apply the knowledge they are gaining in their academic courses and apply their work with client systems to develop the generalist level skills required to become a professional social worker. Requirements for the Generalist/Foundation year field practicum include:

- The development of social work skills that are transferable to all settings and populations
- Demonstration of skills and knowledge that reflect the nine competencies set by the CSWE. These competencies are measured in Mid-Year and Final Field Assessments
- Completion of a minimum of 16 field practicum hours per week
- Weekly participation in a minimum of 1.5 hours of supervision with their Field Instructor
- Submission of one Process Recording per week to their Field Instructor
- Completion of 450 field practicum hours

Specialist/Advanced Year

Students move on to their Specialist/Advanced Year Field Practicum after successfully completing the requirements of the Generalist/Foundation Year Field Practicum. The Specialist/Advanced Year Field Practicum is focused on learning advanced practice skills with individuals, families, communities and organizations. Specialist/Advanced field placements may involve direct practice with client systems, macro practice in administration, social policy and/or research. Requirements for the Specialist/Advanced Year Field Practicum include:

- The student will build upon the nine CSWE Social Work competencies learned in Generalist/Foundation Year as they develop advanced level social work intervention skills
- Completion of a minimum of 16 field practicum hours per week

- Weekly participation in a minimum of 1 hour of supervision with their Field Instructor
- Submission of one Process Recording per week to their Field Instructor
- Completion of 500 field practicum hours

Advanced Standing Students

Students who have earned a bachelor's degree (BSW or BASW) from an accredited school of social work may be admitted to Fordham's MSW Program as "Advanced Standing Students." Advanced Standing students complete the requirements of the Specialist/Advanced Year Field Practicum, listed above

Field Advisement Sessions

Field advisement sessions are a mandatory part of field education for both Generalist/Foundation Year and Specialist/Advanced Year students. Students are expected to attend all seven advisement sessions scheduled over the course of the academic year. Student participation in these sessions is factored into the student's grade for field work each semester. More than one absence over the two semesters of field advising sessions may result in a failing field work grade.

Field advisement sessions offer students the opportunity to share and review their experiences in the field with peers and with their field advisor who facilitates the sessions. Field advisors take on the role of liaison between the student, the field placement agency, and Fordham University.

Please note:

- The field advisor is the first point of contact when a student and/or field instructor has any concerns regarding the field practicum experience. The field advisor will work with the student, the field instructor and the field education department to resolve potential barriers to the learning process.
- Certain placements require enrollment in specific advisement sessions, including but not limited to those students applying for Palliative Care placements and the Integrative Behavioral Health with Youth placements.

Field Instruction Grades and Credits

Field instruction is a year-long course (two consecutive semesters). Students earn 3.5 credits per semester of field education for a total of 7 credits for each academic year of field work.

Field instruction is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis:

- Mid-year and final grades will be entered only when the student's mid-year field evaluations have been submitted by their field instructor.
- If the student is progressing well, a grade of "In Progress" (IP*) is given at the end of the first semester of field instruction.
- At the end of the second semester of field, the final field instruction grade is submitted only when the student's final field evaluations have been submitted by their field instructor. Grades of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) are given upon completion of the course.

Please note:

- The mid-year grade of "IP*" does not change after a final grade of "S" is submitted.
- Generalist/Foundation Year students are not allowed to advance into Specialist/Advanced year courses or field instruction until they have successfully completed both Generalist/Foundation academic

courses and have received a passing Generalist/Foundation final year grade.

Absences from Field Placement

Over the course of an academic year, MSW students are permitted a maximum of three absences from their field placement (for illness or other emergencies). To ensure that the student meets the required hours for field work, absences should be made up at an alternate time which has been agreed upon with the agency/institution. Students must consult with both their field instructor and field advisor before making changes to their weekly schedule.

Extended time off is not an option; a field placement is a commitment to the field placement agency and their clients. The quality and continuity of care provided to vulnerable clients is negatively impacted by excessive absences. Students should plan ahead when arranging their social work internships. Students who require or request extended time off from field placements may have to delay or defer field instruction. Deferring or delaying field instruction will affect a student's plan of study; it is imperative that students consult with the Field Education and Student Services Departments when they are considering a deferral or delay of field education.

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 advisor and field placement instructor and obtain special approval from the field education department to continue in the field placement for that current semester. Lengthy absences for medical reasons require a student to apply for a Medical Leave of Absence with the Student Services Department.

Field education spans a full academic-year (two consecutive semesters). Students who take a leave from their field placement for one or more semesters will be required to restart field placement hours, regardless of the previous hours earned when the interruption or absence occurred.

Administrative Review Process

Students may experience challenges in field placement that require a formal Administrative Review. Possible reasons for this kind of review include, but are not limited to, the student being terminated or self-terminating from the field placement. The student and their field instructor/agency representatives each present their account of the circumstances that lead to the Administrative Review.

The objectives of an Administrative Review can include:

- An assessment of the student's field performance
- Determination of next steps following a field placement termination
- Preservation of the field placement with a formal plan put in place

The Administrative Review Committee includes:

- The Field Advisor
- Field Instructor
- The Director of Field Education
- A representative from the Office of Student Services

Reasons for a Administrative Review may include, but are not limited to:

- Termination or dismissal of a Field Placement
- Self-termination by the student from a field placement

- Receiving a grade of 2 or lower on the Mid-Year or Final Field Evaluation and/or issues with meeting social work competencies
- Any professional conduct or ethical issues that may arise during the placement that will require Fordham's involvement

The Administrative Review Committee determinations may include, but are not limited to:

- Coordination with the Student Services Department to ensure outcome is aligned with coursework and/or plan of study changes that may be required.
- Assignment to a new field placement within the academic year of record, or in the next term for which the student is eligible
- Requirement to complete field placement in its entirety may require the student to wait until the next academic semester or year to begin field
- Removal from the field placement and assignment of a grade of "U" (Unsatisfactory) for the Field Instruction course.
- Referral to the Committee on Academic Progress (CAP) for final review which may result in replacement in another field setting or termination from the program

Supporting Documentation

The Field Education Department is responsible for gathering all necessary documents for this review. Documentation can include:

- Written reports of the field experience from the field instructor and field advisor.
- Review of field documentation that includes the student's educational agreement, attendance record and any field evaluations that were completed by the time of the termination.
- Obtaining the student's perspective to hear their explanation of the field experience.

Field Placement Planning

Students should always refer to their plan of study when registering for courses and field instruction. Students are encouraged to work with their academic advisors and the field education department to ensure that they remain on track to complete all requirements of the program.

Full time and Advanced Standing students begin field instruction in their first semester of the program. Part-time students generally begin field instruction in later semesters (please refer to the GSS Plans of Study).

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 package. If you began the program in a previous semester as a part-time student, you will attend a field planning meeting, and the link to the field application/planning form will be provided at that time.

Once the student submits a field application/planning form, a member of the Field Education team will be assigned to coordinate the student's field placement. Students will be contacted by their assigned placement specialist shortly after submitting their field application/planning form.

Please note that while we strive to accommodate student preferences, we cannot guarantee placement in a specific type of setting or with a particular population. Students are required to accept placements that meet the program's criteria. Refusing a placement based on preferences related to specific populations or communities is not considered a valid

or reasonable basis for rejection. **Additionally, we do not place students in private practices for fieldwork.**

Work/Study Field Placements

To qualify for a Work Study Field Placement, the student must:

- Indicate this preference on their field application
- Submit a Work Study Proposal to the Field Education Department
- Field Placement tasks must be different from employment responsibilities
- The field instructor and the employment supervisor must be different people
- The field instructor must meet the general requirements for field instruction:
 - Three years post-M.S.W. experience
 - New York/New Jersey/Connecticut field instructors are required to complete the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI). Field instructors can sign up for this course at Fordham or any other New York area schools that offer this course.

Please note: Work Study Field Placements must be approved by both your employer and Fordham University. Applying for a Work Study Field Placement does not indicate certainty that this placement will be approved.

Employment Based Placement

Students may have the opportunity to use their current employment as their field placement when the following conditions are met:

- The student must be employed in a social service setting
- The job must be a social work related position

For further information please contact the Field Education Department.

Choices in the Placement Process

The Field Education Department works collaboratively with students to coordinate a Field placement setting that provides the best possible learning experience for each practicum year.

While preferences are taken into account in the Generalist/Foundation Year placement setting will be directly assigned by the Field Education Department. Specialist/Advanced Year students will collaborate with a placement specialist to have the opportunity to be placed in a setting with a population of interest.

Please note:

- Field Placement options increase when students have flexible availability.
- Students who request evening and/or weekend hours are required to be in field placement for a minimum of four hours during the regular business operations/hours of the settings workweek.
- Students are expected to establish their internship schedule in collaboration with the agency/institution.
- Some sites and/or specialized placements may require specific hours and days.
- A field placement is a full academic year (two consecutive semester) commitment.
- Students are not allowed to end field instruction prior to the end of each semester/term.

In both their Generalist/Foundation and their Specialist/Advanced Year, students interview with the potential placement agency to ensure that the setting is a good fit. 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 field coordinator.

Some field placement agencies require a variety of onboarding and clearances that must be completed prior to beginning a field placement. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Criminal background check
- A recent physical exam and/or certain tests or immunizations prior to placement

Students are notified of any agency-related requirements in advance. Cooperation with these requirements is expected. In most instances, the costs of meeting these requirements are the responsibility of the student.

Malpractice Insurance

As a student in field placement, you are covered by a malpractice policy. The cost for this policy is \$31 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

The Fordham Graduate School of Social Services maintains three campuses:

- Lincoln Center Campus
- Westchester Campus
- Online Campus

All students are encouraged to contact the Field Education Department with questions or concerns at: gssfieldinstruction@fordham.edu, Students registered with the Online Campus can contact the online placement team at: fieldeducation@onlinemsw.fordham.edu