Master of Social Work (M.S.W.)

Field Education Policies

Overview
Field instruction is a learning experience in a professional setting that enables you to integrate and apply theory and knowledge in order to develop and practice skills. Field education is designed to provide students with hands-on experience in order to develop appropriate knowledge, value, skills, and professional identification. It takes place in a social work agency that works closely with our school to plan individual learning opportunities for each student. We maintain relationships with many agencies and institutions. Cooperating agencies represent a cross-section of social work practice and include a wide range of programs.

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.

Field Placement Hours and Credits
Students are expected to be in field placement a minimum of 15 hours per week. If you are a student seeking evening/weekend hours, please note you are required to be in field placement a minimum of four consecutive daytime hours during the Monday–Friday work week. For example, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. or 1-5 p.m. on one day Monday–Friday, after 5 p.m., or only on the weekends (or any combination of these).

Integrative Seminar

All students in field instruction are required to participate in an Integrative Seminar. This seminar is considered part of field instruction, so there is not a separate registration. Students indicate their time preference for Integrative Seminar when they complete the electronic field application planning forms. Students enrolled in the online M.S.W. program and the Fordham/Molloy hybrid option are required to participate in an online Integrative Seminar. The Integrative Seminar meets 10 times over the course of the academic year for students enrolled in the Legacy Curriculum (enrolled prior to Fall 2018) and seven times for students in the New Curriculum (enrolled in Fall 2018 or later). The seminar offers you the opportunity to share your experiences in the field and to further integrate course work and fieldwork. The field adviser is the student’s link to the field internship. Students are responsible for notifying the field adviser immediately of any problems or issues at their field site.

Student/Field Placement Match

Field Education Department staff and coordinators use the information you provide on your field planning form, along with your resume, to assign your foundation/generalist field placement. 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. The field placement coordinators work collaboratively with students to find a placement.

Placement planning begins in early winter and continues through the summer months. Some students will take longer than others to place for a variety of reasons. Typically, the student will be notified by email that a possible placement has been identified. At that time, the student is provided with the name of the agency, the website (if there is one), the educational coordinator of the agency, and their phone number, and they'll be directed to contact the agency. Most agencies require the student to visit the agency and meet the field instructor.

Increasingly, agencies are requiring that students submit evidence of a recent physical exam and/or certain tests or immunizations prior to placement. Students should be aware of this and be ready to provide such information directly to the agency. Many agencies further require students to submit to background checks, fingerprinting, or provide other information prior to the finalization of a placement. Cooperation with these requirements is expected. In many instances, the costs of meeting these requirements are the responsibility of the student.

Work/Study 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 planning forms and submit a work/study 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 three years post-M.S.W. experience, must be licensed in accordance with the regulations of the state where you will complete your field placement, and meet other training requirements. The department will review your proposal for suitability and discuss it with the director prior to approval.

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.

Choices in the Advanced/Specialist Placement Process

The Field Education Department works collaboratively with students to determine a field placement setting that provides the best possible learning experience. Students should not contact agencies directly to arrange interviews until advised to do so by your coordinator. In most instances, as an advanced/specialist practice student, you will interview with the agency to ensure that this is the right place for you. Once you have met with the agency, a joint agreement about placement is made. Additional and more detailed information about the advanced/specialist practice placement process is included in the Field Instruction Manual.
Employed Experienced Social Service Practitioner (EESSP)

Students in the Employed Experienced Social Service Practitioners Program (EESSP) enter field placement in the final year of their program and do one placement 28 hours per week and 15 credits at their place of employment. The year prior to entering the field, EESSP students take a year-long Field Practicum Lab course for three credits (SWGS 6907). Students are required to apply to this program at the time of admission to the M.S.W. program. An additional reference is required from the student’s employer verifying that the student has a minimum of three years of social service experience under the supervision of someone holding a M.S.W. and that they will provide a field placement for the student in their final year that is different from their current work assignment.

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 is received. It is important to note that the fall semester 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 submits written evaluations to the school at the end of each semester.

Absences from Field Placement

In field placement settings, students are permitted a maximum of three absences during the year for illness or other emergencies. If a situation occurs in which the student is ill for an extended period of time or another emergency requires their absence, the student must immediately consult with their field adviser and field placement instructor/supervisor.

If a student has any questions or encounters problems in field placement, they should contact 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.