



Department of Social Work

**MSW Student Handbook and Practicum Education
Manual**

2023-2024

The *MSW Student Handbook and Practicum Education Manual* is intended to provide general information and guidance only. The *Handbook* does not constitute a contract, either expressed or implied, and is subject to revision without prior notice at the discretion of the University or the Department of Social Work. Please consult the [Graduate Catalog](#), the MSW Program Coordinator, or the Practicum Education Director for further information.

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INTRODUCTION

[Southern Connecticut State University](#) provides exemplary graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and professional disciplines. As an intentionally diverse and comprehensive University, Southern is committed to academic excellence, access, social justice, and service for the public good.

The [College of Health and Human Services](#) (CHHS) values interdisciplinary education, practice-based learning, and community-based participatory research practices. CHHS academic programs are attentive to the workforce needs of our state and region, and partner extensively with agencies and organizations in New Haven neighborhoods and throughout the state of Connecticut to address local health priorities and achieve equity.

The [Department of Social Work](#) is housed within CHHS. Social work promotes the personal and social development of people in their communities based on the values of social, economic, and environmental justice; civil and human rights; democracy; and full access to educational, social, economic, and political participation. The Department of Social Work educates social workers as competent and compassionate agents of change who, guided by professional knowledge, skills, and values, are prepared to practice ethically and effectively with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; to translate research into practice; and to provide leadership in the profession and in their communities.

The Department of Social Work offers programs that span the social work career, including the [BSW program](#), which prepares social workers for generalist practice; the [MSW program](#), which prepares social workers for specialized practice; and the [DSW program](#), which prepare master's-level social workers for advanced clinical practice, university teaching, and leadership in agency and academic settings.

The BSW and MSW programs are accredited by the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE).

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES AND POLICIES

Southern Connecticut State University, the School of Graduate and Professional Studies, and the Department of Social Work have developed various resources and policies that apply to social work education, including those listed below. For additional resources, policies, and student services, please refer to the [SCSU Student Handbook](#), the [College of Health and Human Services](#), and the search box on the Southern [homepage](#).

Academic Honesty

The integrity of scholarship is the cornerstone of the academic and social structure of the University. It is the expressed policy of the University that every aspect of academic life shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner. Academic honesty is further required by the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and by the professional standards and behaviors of the Department of Social Work. Plagiarism and other [violations of academic honesty](#) may be grounds for a failing grade in a course and for dismissal from a practicum and from the social work program.

Academic Support Services

The [Center for Academic Success and Accessibility Services \(CASAS\)](#) provides academic support services, including tutoring and support with writing.

Accommodations for Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Southern provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities on an individualized basis. The [Center for Academic Success and Accessibility Services \(CASAS\)](#) assists students with documented disabilities to determine appropriate accommodations. Before receiving accommodations in a class, students must schedule an appointment with CASAS and then meet with the instructor to plan or review approved accommodations.

Accommodations for Observance of Religious Holy Days

Students will be excused from class attendance or other requirements if the tenets of their religion forbid secular activity on the particular day or time of day of the class session. Students requesting a religious accommodation should consult with the instructor prior to the class session to arrange for the excused absence and make up missed work.

Assessment of Disabilities

Students who need documentation for accommodations or who are concerned about potential mental health issues, ADHD, or learning disabilities may receive low-cost psychological testing evaluations from the [SCSU Psychological Assessment Office](#).

Campus Map

Southern is located at 501 Crescent Street, New Haven, CT 06515. The Department of Social Work offices are located at Lang House, 101 Farnham Avenue (faculty offices, student lounge) and at Orlando House, 104 Farnham Avenue (offices of admissions, practicum education, and online learning). Social work students have classes in various buildings and enjoy the Buley Library, Adanti Student Center, and other facilities throughout [campus](#).

Childcare

The [COMPASS Drop-in Childcare and Family Resource Center](#) provides a reservable, short-term (maximum 3.5 hours per day) program for the children of Southern students and employees.

Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Southern is committed to identifying and addressing systemic barriers to equity, access, and success for all members of our community. We are also committed to constructive dialogues where we treat one another with dignity, respect, kindness, compassion, and civility as we share varying perspectives, with the goal of creating a culture of inclusion and belonging. The [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) seeks to advance Southern towards a social justice-oriented and anti-racist University.

Email

Southern will communicate you via your Southern email address. Please use your Southern email in writing to us and check it frequently. For assistance in accessing your email account, contact the Help Desk at helpdesk@southernct.edu.

Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC)

The [Graduate Student Affairs Committee \(GSAC\)](#) is comprised of students from the various programs within the School of Graduate and Professional Studies. All graduate students are welcome at meetings and are encouraged to participate. The Graduate Student Affairs Committee is dedicated to enhancing the experience of graduate students. Our goal is to promote individual academic endeavors, as well as collective cultural and social experiences at Southern. GSAC also acts as an advocacy group to better serve the needs of the graduate student body as a whole.

Identification Card

The multipurpose [ID card](#) (Hoot Loot) is the primary University identification card and is mandatory for all students. The Hoot Loot ID card functions as a library card and as a key to some buildings. The card also contains each student's unique eight-digit University identification number. Students may obtain the Southern Hoot Loot ID card by visiting the University Card Office, located in the Wintergreen Building.

Information Technology Help Desk

The [SCSU Information Technology Department](#) supports the campus community in the use of information and academic technologies, such as BannerWeb, e-mail accounts, library accounts, and classroom technologies. For assistance, please email helpdesk@SouthernCT.edu or call (203) 392-5123.

Library Resources

The [Buley Library](#) has extensive resources for social work research, including online databases and access to materials through interlibrary loan. Students may contact Lisa Bier, the designated social sciences reference librarian, for individualized assistance with capstones and other projects: BierL1@SouthernCT.edu or 203-392-5131.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Your physical and mental health are critical to your learning and success. Southern has a comprehensive range of supports available to enhance your holistic wellbeing, including the [Wellbeing Center](#), the Food Pantry, Counseling Services, Health Services, Recreation and Fitness, Alcohol and Drug Services and Recovery Services, and Violence Prevention, Victim Advocacy and Support (VPAS).

Nondiscrimination Policy

The Southern [nondiscrimination policy](#) specifies that Southern does not discriminate on the basis of age; ancestry; color; gender identity and expression; intellectual disability; learning disability; mental disorder; physical disability; marital status; national origin; race; religious creed; sex, including pregnancy; transgender status; sexual harassment and sexual assault; sexual orientation; veteran status; or any other status protected by federal or state laws.

Parking

To have a vehicle on campus, students, faculty, and staff must complete their [vehicle registration and parking permit application](#).

Policy Statement on Pluralism

The Southern [policy statement on pluralism](#) forbids acts of violence or harassment reflecting bias or intolerance based on an individual's race, religious creed, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and ethnic or cultural origin. The University has procedures for investigating complaints of acts of intolerance brought by students or staff.

Sexual Misconduct

Southern is concerned about the safety of all University community members. Sexual harassment and sexual violence (sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation) are not acceptable behaviors in our community and are violations of the law, University policies, and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Southern is committed to providing prevention education and support services to survivors and holding perpetrators accountable. Visit the [Sexual Misconduct](#) webpage for resources and policies related to sexual misconduct, including policies, reporting procedures, and students' rights.

Support and Resource Team

The Southern [Support and Resource Team \(SART\)](#) provides a collaborative, victim-centered team response to sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation). The mission of SART is to provide services that ensure a transition from victim to survivor for every individual whose life is impacted by sexual misconduct. The SART members can provide a survivor with many supportive options including counseling, medical attention, judicial services, advocacy, law enforcement, referrals, and general information regarding sexual violence.

Research Protection Program

Students who plan to involve human or animal subjects in their research must obtain approval or exemption in accordance with the [SCSU Research Protection Program](#). Students who plan to involve human subjects in a research study (for example, in interviews, surveys, or observations) must obtain approval or exemption from the Institutional Review Board or IRB. In addition, students who plan research with human subjects may need to obtain approval in accordance with the policies of a particular agency or organization, as applicable.

Student Code of Conduct

The SCSU [Student Code of Conduct](#) presents a statement of students' rights and responsibilities established by the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education. It defines prohibited conduct, the disciplinary process for violations, and potential consequences for violations.

Undocumented Student Support Team

Southern is committed to a mission of [social justice](#). That means we strive to ensure that all members of our community are treated with dignity, respect, kindness, compassion and civility. The [Undocumented Student Support Team](#) has three primary goals: 1) to identify and break down barriers faced by undocumented students and their families; 2) to engage and educate the community about the realities of being an immigrant in the United States; and 3) to advocate for policies that support our students on the campus, state, and national level.

University Police

The mission of the [Southern Police Department](#) is to provide exceptional police services in partnership with the Southern community, to protect and serve, to maintain a safe environment, to

enhance the quality of life and learning, and to promote a culture of respect and trust. Students may request an on-campus [walking escort service](#) for their safety 24 hours a day.

Veterans Services

The [Office for Veterans, Military, and Adult Learner Services](#) provides counsel, academic advisement, GI Bill and Tuition Waiver Certifications, and liaison with state and federal agencies. You can obtain information about the GI Bill and laws that provide rehabilitation and educational assistance to disabled or war veterans and their dependents. You can also find out about medical entitlements, discharge upgrades, and other benefits available from the Veterans Administration. The Veterans' Center offers a lively meeting place with computers and comfortable furniture where you can meet other students, study, socialize, or relax between classes. The Veterans' Center is in Engleman Hall, Room A014 and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW)

The [Master of Social Work \(MSW\)](#) program educates social workers as competent and compassionate agents of change who, guided by professional knowledge, skills, and values, practice ethically and effectively with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Graduates of the MSW program hold professional social work positions in public service and in private agencies and qualify for the State of Connecticut Master-Level Social Worker License (LMSW).

The MSW program prepares social workers who:

- Identify as social workers with a commitment to the values and goals of the profession.
- Practice with cultural humility, cultural responsiveness, and respect for diverse populations.
- Seek innovative solutions to human and social needs.
- Pursue lifelong learning and professional development.
- Collaborate with local and global communities in building an inclusive and just society.

MSW Curriculum

The MSW program is accredited by the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE). The MSW curriculum, including coursework and practicum education, prepares students to demonstrate Social Work competencies and related behaviors in generalist and specialist practice. The Social Work competencies are defined by [CSWE Educational and Accreditation Standards](#) (2022 EPAS) as follows:

- Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
- Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
- Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in practice.
- Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
- Engage in policy practice.
- Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organization, and communities.
- Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

MSW Specializations

The MSW program offers two specializations: the MSW in Clinical Practice and the MSW in Community Practice: Community Organization, Policy, and Leadership.

The MSW in [Clinical Practice](#) prepares social workers to promote the health, development, recovery, and community integration of persons who are living with emotional distress, mental illness, substance use, and/or the absence or loss of positive relationships with their environments. Guided by principles of culturally responsive, anti-racist, anti-oppressive social work practice, students build specialized knowledge and skills in clinical social work that apply social work values and ethics; respect human and cultural diversity; use trauma-informed, community-based, empirically supported approaches; and advance social justice and human rights.

The MSW in [Community Practice: Community Organization, Policy, and Leadership](#) prepares social workers to promote the personal and social development of people in their communities based on

the values of social justice, human rights, and full access to social participation. Guided by principles of culturally responsive, anti-racist, anti-oppressive social work practice, students build specialized knowledge and skills in community-engaged research, policy analysis and advocacy, community organizing and development, and human services administration.

MSW Program Plans

MSW Program (60 Credits)

The [MSW program](#) is a 60-credit program that may be completed in two or three years of full-time study, including 950 hours of practicum education. Employed students are strongly encouraged to choose the three-year program plan.

During the first part of the MSW program, students develop *generalist* knowledge and skills, and they complete a generalist practicum of 400 hours (about 14 hours per week) in the fall and spring semesters of an academic year. During the second part of the program, students develop *specialized* knowledge and skills in Clinical Practice or in Community Practice: Community Organization, Policy, and Leadership, and they complete a specialist practicum of 550 hours (about 18 hours per week).

Advanced Standing MSW Program (33 Credits)

Students who have graduated within six years from a CSWE-accredited BSW program may apply to the [Advanced Standing](#) MSW program. Advanced standing students have demonstrated competencies in generalist social work through exemplary performance in their BSW education. Advanced standing students complete 33 credits of specialized MSW coursework in Clinical Practice or Community Practice: Community Organization, Policy, and Leadership, including a specialized practicum of 550 hours (about 18 hours per week). The Advanced Standing program may be completed in one calendar year of full-time study (summer, fall, and spring semesters) or in two academic years of full-time study (two fall semesters and two spring semesters). Employed students are strongly encouraged to select the two-year Advanced Standing program plan.

Dual Degree: MSW/MA in Women's & Gender Studies (72 Credits)

The dual degree in [MSW Clinical Practice and MA in Women's & Gender Studies](#) or [MSW Community Practice and MA in Women's & Gender Studies](#) allows students to prepare for specialized social work practice while also exploring and applying research and theory in women's and gender studies. Academic coursework, internships, and mentoring relationships afford interdisciplinary opportunities for integrating methods of scholarly inquiry, critical problem-solving, and leadership development. The dual degree consists of 72 credits, which may be completed in three academic years. Advanced standing students may complete the dual degree in 45 credits taken over two academic years.

Disaster Mental Health Graduate Certificate (Online, 12 Credits)

The [Disaster Mental Health Graduate Certificate](#) is an online program that may be taken concurrently with or independently from another graduate degree. For further information, please contact Dr. Shuei Kozu at kozus1@southernct.edu.

Social Work Academic Policies

ADEI (Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Acceptance, and Belonging)

Higher education has not been equally accessible or attainable for all. Some students have been historically excluded and are currently challenged by societal oppression outside the classroom and by traditional norms, communication patterns, unwritten rules, and biased expectations inside the classroom. In social work classes, we try to decolonize social work education by deconstructing some privilege-dominant perspectives and practices and by studying some disenfranchised perspectives and practices. We strive for a willingness to learn through various approaches and to dismantle narratives that have silenced marginalized voices. Our commitment to anti-racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and acceptance in the classroom is consistent with the principles, values, and standards of social work as defined by the [NASW Code of Ethics \(2021\)](#) and the [CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards](#) (2022). It is a commitment that calls for your input, critical thinking, and respectful and brave dialogue. We understand decolonizing conversations may be difficult. Please enter the classroom environment in a manner that is self-aware, self-loving, and considerate of others. Your role in your classes is to remain present and respectful and to engage in the difficult conversations that support your growth, development, and leadership. Social justice is a directive of action, and it is on every one of us to do our part.

Advising Guides

Upon admission to the MSW program, each student receives an Advising Guide that specifies the courses to be taken in each semester of the two-year, three-year, advanced standing, or dual degree program plans. *Students who take courses out of sequence risk delaying their anticipated date of graduation.* Therefore, be sure to follow your advising guide or consult with your faculty advisor before making any changes in your program plan. Advising guides are posted in [Blackboard Learning 9, Organizations, Master of Social Work Advising](#).

Advisors

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor, who serves as their academic navigator and guide throughout the MSW program. Consult your advisor when selecting your courses each semester, reviewing your degree evaluation, seeking academic support and other University services, and making academic and professional plans. Faculty advisors are most easily reached by email and will gladly meet with you in-person or online when you are preparing to register for courses and throughout the academic year.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Language that is generated by AI tools such as ChatGPT or other chatbots may be used in coursework or agency assignments only with the explicit permission of the course instructor, the practicum instructor, or the agency. AI-generated texts in assignments must be cited according to [APA guidelines](#). In addition, students must carefully and critically review AI-generated materials to assure that they are accurate and free from bias. Unattributed use of AI language is considered a violation of academic integrity and professional standards and may be grounds for a failing grade in the course, dismissal from the practicum, and dismissal from the Social Work program.

Class Attendance

Attendance and participation in social work classes are required professional responsibilities. Students are expected to attend every class session, to arrive on time, and to remain for the full class. Students ordinarily must attend and participate in at least 80% of class sessions to earn a

passing grade in the class. In the case of a medical emergency, exigent circumstance, accommodation for a documented disability, or accommodation for religious observance, students are responsible for notifying the instructor of an anticipated absence *before the class session* and for arranging to make up work. Students must complete any makeup work that is assigned by the instructor in a timely fashion.

Students seeking reasonable accommodations for a documented disability must be registered with [Center for Academic Success and Academic Services](#).

Class Participation

Class participation involves an engaged and collaborative learning process that requires consistent punctuality and attendance in all class sessions; preparation; respectful attention; cultural humility and demonstration of anti-racist, anti-oppressive principles; thoughtful contributions to class discussions; participation in exercises and activities; adherence to class norms and/or Netiquette; appropriate use of technology in the classroom; and demonstration of social work professional standards and behaviors within and beyond the class. Additional expectations for class participation may be defined in the class syllabus.

Class Participation Online

Class participation online involves the same engaged and collaborative learning process as class participation in person. In addition, students in online classes are expected to abide by the following guidelines, which will be considered in grades for attendance, class participation, and the total course grade:

- Online classes take place in a virtual classroom (Zoom or Teams), and appropriate classroom behavior is expected.
- Respect the start and end times of the class.
- Log into your class from a distraction-free, quiet environment. Under no circumstances should you join the class session if you are driving a vehicle.
- Display your full name and pronouns.
- Take care of your personal needs (appropriate dress, basic hygiene, eating, talking to others in your home, etc.) prior to entering the virtual classroom.
- Turn your camera or video on with your full face viewable; be sure your camera and room lighting allow others to see your full face.
- Mute and pause your video when you step away from the camera.
- Use the Zoom functions to communicate as needed (chat, raise your hand, answer yes/no, etc.).
- Communicate with your instructor if you will be late or if you lose your connection during class.
- Pay attention! Maintain eye contact with the speaker on the screen.
- It is strongly recommended that you use a computer during your online class. If you do not have a computer, the University might have resources to support you.

Class Schedules

MSW classes are scheduled such that most students come to campus no more than twice per week. Students may take classes on evenings, on one weekday per week, and/or on weekends. Courses are delivered via in-person and online formats. The MSW program currently is accredited by CSWE as a traditional, face-to-face program. Students therefore may take no more than 49% of online

credits per semester (i.e., one online course out of three courses or two online courses out of four or five courses).

Confidentiality and Privacy of Class Sessions

Consistent with the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), the Department of Social Work respects the confidentiality of students' educational records and the privacy of their participation in class sessions. *Students may not record a class or post discussions or images from class sessions without the explicit permission of the instructor and all other students in the class.* Violations of this policy will be considered a violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and of social work professional standards and behaviors and may result in failing the course and dismissal from the Social Work program.

Grade Appeal

According to University policy, students may submit a [Grade Appeal](#) only in instances in which a palpable injustice can be claimed. A palpable injustice occurs when a faculty member has been demonstrably inconsistent and unfair to the student. Grade appeals can only be submitted in the semester after the grade is received. The grade appeal procedure consists of three levels: 1) discussion with the instructor; 2) mediation with the department chair; and 3) referral to the University Academic Standing Committee (UASC).

HIPAA Privacy Rule

In accordance with the [HIPAA Privacy Rule](#), social work students must protect the privacy of clients' health information and remove any identifying information in process recordings, academic assignments, and class discussions.

Incomplete Grades

Students may request that an instructor allow a 30-day extension for completing course requirements, provided that the request is made before the end of the semester. Instructors ordinarily will consider an Incomplete grade only when the student has satisfactorily completed most course requirements and has less than 30% of coursework remaining. If the instructor grants the student's request for an extension, then the student and the instructor complete an [Incomplete Grade Contract](#) and a temporary Incomplete ("I") grade is recorded.

MSW students with two or more Incomplete grades may be referred to the Student Support and Evaluation Committee (SEC) and advised to complete those courses before continuing in the MSW program. Students with two or more Incompletes that have extended beyond two semesters will be advised to take a [Leave of Absence](#) until the Incompletes have been resolved.

Independent Study

SWK 600 Independent Study and Research (one to three credits) allows students to study independently under the direction of a faculty sponsor. The independent study course requires a level of scholarship that is equivalent to a traditional graduate course. Only matriculated social work students who have completed a minimum of nine credits of graduate work and have maintained at least a 3.0 ("B") grade point average are eligible for an independent study. Each independent study course must be approved as an academically sound component of the student's planned program of study by the faculty sponsor, the MSW program coordinator, the chair of the

social work department, and the dean of the College of Health and Human Services. The signed [Independent Study Application](#) form must be submitted to the dean of the College of Health and Human Services no later than the official first day of classes each semester.

Prior Learning

The MSW program does not grant course credit or course waivers for life experience or previous work experience.

Time Limitation to Complete Program

All [requirements for a graduate degree](#) at Southern must be completed within a period of six years, which includes any leaves of absence. Graduate courses taken more than six years before the time of graduation will not count toward meeting degree requirements.

Transfer Credits

Upon their admission to the MSW program, students may request that up to 15 credits be transferred from another CSWE-accredited MSW program. To request transfer credits, students must have official transcripts sent by the transferring institution to the registrar at registrar@southernct.edu, and they must submit a [Transfer Credit Request](#) form to the MSW program coordinator. The transfer credits will be evaluated by the MSW program coordinator to determine whether they satisfy MSW degree requirements, including the six-year time limitation for completing the degree.

Withdrawals and Leaves of Absence

- **Withdrawal from a Course:** Students may drop a course within the first seven days of the semester, or they may withdraw from a full-semester course during the first 12 weeks of the semester (see [Withdrawal Deadlines](#) for shorter terms). Such a [withdrawal](#) is recorded as a "W" on the transcript but does not impact the student's grade point average. Students may withdraw online through student BannerWeb services prior to the end of the withdrawal period. Before withdrawing from a course, students are encouraged to confer with their instructor and faculty adviser and with the Office of Financial Aid, if applicable.
- **Leave of Absence:** Students who need to take time off from their studies with the intention of returning within 12 months must submit a [Leave of Absence](#) form to the Registrar's Office. Students taking a leave of absence are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty advisor, the Student Support and Evaluation Committee, and the financial aid office to discuss their plans for degree completion and to understand the impact of the leave of absence on their academic and financial statuses.
- **Withdrawal from the University:** Students who need to step away from their studies without the intention of returning within 12 months may [withdraw from the University](#). If withdrawing before the end of the semester, students should confer with their instructors, their faculty advisor, and/or the Student Support and Evaluation Committee to review their options for successful completion of the semester. Students who wish to resume their MSW program after having withdrawn from the University must apply for [readmission](#) to the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Social Work Student Activities

Beta Rho Chapter, Phi Alpha Honor Society

The Beta Rho Chapter of the [Phi Alpha Honor Society](#) was chartered at Southern in 1989. In January of each year, the Beta Rho Chapter extends a call for new members. Eligible students are those who have completed 37.5% of required coursework and whose grade point average places them in the top 35% of MSW students. For further information, please contact Stephen Monroe Tomczak at tomczaks1@southernct.edu.

Graduate Social Work Organization (GSWO)

The Graduate Social Work Organization (GSWO) is a student-led organization that is open to all MSW students. The GSWO has the purpose of responding to the academic and collegial needs of students as defined by the students. GSWO activities include participation in orienting new students, providing community service and professional development programs, and planning social events. For further information, please contact Mark Cameron at cameronm3@southernct.edu.

Social Welfare Action Alliance, SCSU Chapter (SWAA-SCSU)

The Southern student chapter of the [Social Welfare Action Alliance](#) works with the national and statewide chapters to address issues of social and economic injustice. For further information, please contact Stephen Monroe Tomczak at tomczaks1@southernct.edu

Social Work Department Committees

The Department of Social Work adheres to the University policies related to student membership on department committees. MSW students hold membership through representation in faculty meetings of the Social Work department and the MSW Core. For further information, please contact the Social Work Department chair or the MSW program coordinator.

Evaluation of Student Performance

“Social work educators are responsible for ensuring that students are prepared to practice safely, competently, and ethically with all clients, constituents, and the public,” as stated by the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 2022 EPAS, p. 5).

To fulfill this responsibility, the social work department continuously evaluates students’ performance in relation to three sets of standards: 1) academic standards, 2) practicum education standards, and 3) professional standards and behaviors. Students’ admission to and continuation in the social work program is contingent upon ongoing positive evaluation of their performance in each area.

Academic Standards

According to [University standards](#), graduate students must maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (“B”) in order to continue in or graduate from the MSW program. In addition, MSW students must earn a minimum grade of 2.0 (“C”) for all graded social work courses and a passing grade (“P”) for Pass/Fail courses (SWK 570, SWK 571, SWK 574, SWK 575).

Academic Probation and Dismissal

Students who attempt nine or more credits that result in an overall grade point average of less than 3.0 are automatically placed on [probation](#). If, after attempting an additional nine credits, the student's GPA is still below 3.0, then the student is dismissed from the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Conditional Admission

Students who are [conditionally admitted](#) to the MSW program must complete their first nine credits with a graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher. Students who do not meet this condition are dismissed from the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Readmission

Students who are dismissed may apply for [readmission](#) to the MSW program after the lapse of one semester.

Practicum Education Standards

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) identifies practicum education as the signature pedagogy for social work (2022 EPAS). Practicum education affords students the opportunities to develop and demonstrate professional knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes that contribute to specified social work competencies and behaviors in generalist and specialist social work practice.

Detailed expectations for students' performance in practicum education are specified in the Practicum Education section of this *Handbook*. These expectations include, but are not limited to: collaborating with the Practicum Education office in securing a practicum within the first four weeks of the fall semester; completing required practicum hours as scheduled with the agency; satisfactorily performing practicum responsibilities as assigned by the practicum instructor or specified on the practicum education contract; effectively engaging in the supervision process; and making satisfactory progress toward demonstrating social work competencies and behaviors as documented each semester by a passing grade on the practicum evaluation from.

Professional Standards and Behaviors

The Department of Social Work identifies the following professional standards and behaviors as essential to students' professional development and to their development of social work competencies and behaviors as required by CSWE (2022 EPAS). MSW students are expected to demonstrate professional standards and behaviors throughout the social work program, including in their interactions in classes, practicum education, and activities in the University and the wider community. Failure to demonstrate professional standards and behaviors may be considered grounds for failing a course, dismissal from a practicum, and/or dismissal from the MSW program.

1. Professional and Ethical Commitment

Students' behavior must demonstrate their willingness and ability to uphold the principles values, and standards of the social work profession as specified by the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).

2. Diversity and Social Justice

Students' behavior must demonstrate their ability and willingness to appreciate, respect, and value human and cultural diversity in their communications and interactions with others.

3. Professional Use of Self

Students' behavior must demonstrate their willingness and ability to examine how their values, attitudes, beliefs, biases, emotions, and past experiences may affect their thinking, behaviors, and professional interactions and to adjust behaviors that may be inconsistent with professional values, ethics, and goals.

4. Empathy

Students' behavior must demonstrate their willingness and ability to seek knowledge and understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and values of others and to use such empathy as a basis for professional relationships.

5. Communication Skills

Students' behavior must demonstrate their willingness and ability to communicate effectively and respectfully in professional interactions, whether in person or online, including the ability to express ideas and feelings clearly, to listen to others, and to be aware of the possible impact that personal communications on social media may have in a professional setting. Students must demonstrate sufficient oral and written English-language proficiency to perform successfully in the program.

6. Interpersonal Skills

Students' behavior must demonstrate their ability and willingness to relate effectively in professional interactions, including behaviors that show compassion, altruism, integrity, and respect for and consideration of others.

7. Time and Energy

Students' behavior must demonstrate their ability and willingness to devote the time and energy necessary to meet expectations of the MSW program, including class attendance, class participation, timely completion of assignments, and practicum responsibilities.

8. Professional Demeanor

Students' behavior must demonstrate their ability and willingness to comport themselves as professionals, including their demonstration of punctuality, timeliness, responsiveness, reliability, and appropriate self-presentation in person, online, and in social media.

9. Scope of Practice

Students' behavior must demonstrate their ability and willingness to practice within the scope of their developing competencies, including identifying themselves as social work students or interns, accurately assessing their level of professional competence, and using supervision and consultation to guide professional judgement and practice.

10. Knowledge Base for Social Work Practice

Students' behavior must demonstrate their ability and willingness to seek, apply, and translate professional knowledge and to pursue continuous learning and professional development as students and throughout their social work careers.

Student Support and Evaluation Committee (SEC)

The Student Support and Evaluation Committee (SEC) is a social work department committee that supports and evaluates students' performance in relation to academic standards, practicum education standards, and professional standards and behaviors. The purposes of the SEC evaluation are two-fold: 1) to collaborate with the student in assessing the student's performance from a strengths-based perspective, including specifying goals, identifying barriers, locating supportive resources and services, and planning for successful completion of their degree; and 2) to recommend to the department chair whether and how the student may continue or continue conditionally in the social work program.

Referrals to the SEC

Students who appear to be having difficulty in meeting academic standards, practicum education standards, or professional standards may be referred to the SEC chair. Referrals may be made by social work faculty members (including full time and part time faculty), the program coordinator, the practicum education director or assistant director, or other department staff. Students may also refer themselves to the SEC.

Referrals related to **professional standards** may be indicated when the student's behaviors in a class, a practicum, and/or in activities at Southern or in the wider community are inconsistent with the professional standards and behaviors as defined above.

Referrals related to **academic standards** may be indicated when the student:

- Has not earned a mid-term grade of C or P or is at risk of failing a social work course.
- Has not earned a final grade of C or P in a social work course.
- Has not maintained a minimum GPA of 3.0 and has been placed on academic probation.
- Has requested or received two or more Incomplete grades (I) in a semester or one or more extended Incomplete grades (I+).
- Has requested a program change, course withdrawal, leave of absence, or University withdrawal.
- Other indications of difficulty in meeting academic standards.

Referrals related to **practicum education standards** may be indicated when the student:

- Has not secured a practicum by the fourth week of the fall semester.
- Has not secured a practicum after two agency interviews or two opportunities for agency interviews.
- Has not completed required practicum hours as scheduled with the agency.
- Has not satisfactorily performed practicum assignments as reported by the practicum instructor.
- Has not achieved a passing score on the practicum evaluation.
- Is at risk of dismissal or has been dismissed from the practicum by the agency.
- Has requested a change of practicum.

- Other indications of difficulty in meeting practicum education standards.

SEC Process

The SEC process is managed in as timely a fashion as possible while ensuring a fair, careful, and complete review of the student's performance.

Referrals to the SEC are made in writing to the SEC chair, who schedules the SEC meeting. The SEC chair notifies the student by email of the referral, the reasons for the referral, and the time and place of the SEC meeting, which may be held in person or online. The SEC chair may seek additional documentation related to the referral and may request information from the student's instructors about the student's performance in current classes. The student is encouraged to consult their faculty advisor or another support person of their choice prior to the SEC meeting and to bring that support person to the meeting. The student is asked to confirm receipt of the notice of the SEC meeting and to indicate whether they and their support person will attend.

Participants in the SEC meeting include the SEC chair; the relevant program coordinator; a faculty member; the practicum education director or assistant director, if relevant; the student; and the student's support person.

During the first part of the meeting, the SEC reviews information leading to the referral. The SEC chair introduces the committee members, reviews the reasons for the referral, and provides documentation or other pertinent information. The SEC then asks the student for their point of view. In conversation with the committee, the student may provide additional information; assess their progress toward demonstrating professional, academic, or practicum education standards; share their educational and professional goals; identify needed resources; express their preferred outcome for the meeting; and suggest a plan for moving forward.

During the second part of the meeting, the student leaves the meeting, and the SEC goes into executive session to consider a course of action. The committee evaluates the student's progress toward demonstrating professional, academic, and or practicum education standards; discusses the student's strengths, goals, challenges, and barriers; identifies possible supportive resources, services, and strategies; and recommends whether and how the student may continue or continue conditionally in the program.

The SEC votes on its findings and recommendations, which then are forwarded in writing by the SEC chair to the chair of the Department of Social Work. The department chair may accept, reverse, or modify the SEC findings and recommendations and/or take other actions. The department chair may seek additional information or ask to meet with the student before making a final decision.

Once the department chair has communicated a final decision to the SEC, the SEC chair sends a decision letter to the student by email. The decision letter reviews the reasons for the referral and presents the department chair's decision, which may include a plan, a timeline, and the possibility of a follow-up SEC meeting to review the student's progress. The decision letter includes information about the appeal process. The student is asked to confirm receipt of the decision letter and to indicate whether they accept the decision.

Appeal Process

After the student has received the decision letter, the student may appeal the department chair's decision by filing a written grievance to the dean of the College of Health and Human Services. The written grievance should explain why the student believes that the SEC process was unfair or based on erroneous information. *The student must have exhausted departmental remedies before filing a grievance with the dean.* The dean may deny the student's appeal, reverse or modify the department's decision, or take other action.

Please note that the [grade appeal procedure](#) is a separate process that is not considered by the SEC.

PRACTICUM EDUCATION

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) identifies practicum education as the signature pedagogy for social work. The MSW practicum education curriculum consists of two different practicums or internships that each extend through the fall and spring semesters of an academic year. Students are supervised onsite by an agency-based *practicum instructor*, who has been approved by the Practicum Education office.

Students' learning in the practicum is supported by practicum seminars (SWK 570, 571, 574, 575) that are taken concurrently with the practicum. Practicum seminars afford opportunities for students to integrate academic learning with their practicum experience, to assess their ongoing professional development, and to participate in peer supervision and mutual aid. The seminar instructor serves as *faculty liaison* with the agency-based practicum instructor or supervisor for students in the seminar class.

The Placement Process

The Practicum Education office maintains an extensive roster of approved practicum sites. Students are welcome to propose new agencies to the Practicum Education staff for consideration as a new practicum site, however *all practicums must be arranged and approved by the Practicum Education office*.

Practicum Applications

Students apply for their first or generalist practicum (SWK 570/571) by submitting an [application](#) and résumé to the Practicum Education office. The résumé is used to introduce students to prospective agencies. Newly admitted MSW students who will be entering a practicum submit their practicum application upon admission to the MSW program. Continuing MSW students who will be entering their first practicum submit their practicum application by January 31 of the preceding academic year.

Students who will be entering their second or specialist practicum (SWK 574/575) submit an updated practicum [application](#) and résumé to the Practicum Education office by January 31 of the preceding academic year.

The Practicum Education staff meets individually with students during the spring or summer semester before the practicum will begin. The purpose of the meeting is to explore practicum opportunities related to the student's educational and professional interests and goals. In meeting with students who will be entering their second or specialist practicum, the Practicum Education office identifies practicum opportunities in the student's specialization of Clinical Practice or Community Practice: Community Organization, Policy, and Leadership.

Students are encouraged to disclose to the Practicum Education staff any anticipated needs for accommodations for documented disabilities as arranged with the [Center for Academic Success and Accessibility Services \(CASAS\)](#); any prior criminal history; and other particular circumstances. Although the Practicum Education office considers the student's geographical or scheduling preferences, educational goals are the primary reasons for choosing a practicum site.

After the Practicum Education staff identifies a possible practicum opportunity, the student arranges an interview at the agency with the prospective practicum instructor or supervisor. If the

student, practicum instructor, and agency agree that the practicum is suitable, then the Practicum Education staff sends a confirmation letter to the student and the agency. If the student and prospective practicum instructor do not accept the practicum, then the student is referred to another practicum opportunity. It is expected that the second practicum opportunity will be final.

Practicum Start Date

Students must have a confirmed practicum by the fourth week of the fall semester. Students who have not begun their practicum by the end of the fourth week of the fall semester may be required to withdraw from the practicum seminar (SWK 570/SWK 532 or SWK 574) and to enroll again in the fall semester of the following academic year.

Practicum Schedules

MSW students complete a total of 950 practicum hours, including a minimum of 400 hours of generalist practice in their first-year practicum (14 hours per week) and 550 hours of specialized practice in their second-year practicum (18 hours per week). Advanced standing students complete 550 hours of specialist practice. A minimum of 75% of the scheduled practicum hours must be completed in-person, on-site at the agency.

Practicum schedules necessarily accommodate the needs of agencies and their clients. *Students therefore should plan for practicums that are held during weekday hours.* Although some agencies offer clinical services during evenings and weekends, social work interns typically are assigned weekday responsibilities, such as participating in staff meetings, case conferences, and supervision.

Background Checks

Students who apply for a practicum are encouraged to disclose any criminal history (felony or misdemeanor convictions) to assist the Practicum Education office in identifying practicum opportunities. Students with criminal records may be admitted to the MSW program; however, previous convictions may limit students' practicum options and their eligibility to apply for social work licensure. Some practicum sites require prospective interns to be fingerprinted and to pass criminal and driving background checks, child welfare background checks, drug tests, and/or physical examinations.

Practicum Sites

An agency that is approved as a practicum site promotes the values and goals of the social work profession and provides programs and services that allow students to develop and demonstrate required social work competencies and behaviors as defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the Department of Social Work. The agency expresses a commitment to:

1. Support the mission and goals of the University and the Department of Social Work;
2. Foster a learning environment where the principles anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion are practiced and valued;
3. Abide by University and department policies and regulations, including those related to academic honesty; accessibility; FERPA; HIPPA; accommodations for religious holidays; nondiscrimination; pluralism; sexual harassment; research protection; and student conduct;
4. Provide one hour per week of scheduled social work supervision by an approved practicum instructor;

5. Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate social work competencies and behaviors;
6. Provide students with responsibilities for social work practice with client systems of various sizes and with a diversity of client populations;
7. Provide students with adequate resources and facilities for effective and safe social work practice;
8. Allow time for new practicum instructions to participate in the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI).

Practicum Instructors

Practicum instructors are agency-based social workers who are approved by the Practicum Education office to provide social work supervision to MSW students. Practicum instructors are approved who:

1. For generalist practicums, hold an accredited MSW degree, LMSW master's licensure preferred, and have at least two years of post-master's social work practice experience.
2. For specialist practicums in Clinical Practice, hold an accredited MSW degree, LCSW clinical licensure preferred, and have at least two years of post-master's social work practice experience.
3. For specialist practicums in Community Practice, hold an accredited MSW degree, LMSW master's licensure preferred, and have at least two years of post-master's social work practice experience.
4. Are authorized to provide resources, to support student safety, to plan orientation, to negotiate practicum assignments, and to represent the agency in relation to the Practicum Education office.
5. Have access to client records and clinical observation as necessary for supervision.
6. Will provide at least one hour per week of scheduled social work supervision on-site at the agency.
7. Will be present at the agency for at least 25 percent of the student's practicum hours.

In exceptional circumstances, approved practicum instructors may be allied professionals who do not hold an MSW degree, provided that the agency offers opportunities for the student to demonstrate required social work competencies and behaviors and the MSW program offers supplementary social work supervision.

Responsibilities of Practicum Instructors

Practicum instructors provide social work supervision to students, including collaborating with students in developing assignments, assessing learning, and evaluating practice. They assume responsibilities to:

1. Support the values and goals of social work education and the professional development of students.
2. Provide orientation, access to resources, and supports for student safety.
3. Collaborate with the student in completing the practicum education contract.
4. Provide opportunities for the student to demonstrate required social work competencies and behaviors as per the practicum education contract.
5. Provide one hour per week of individualized social work supervision on site at the

- agency.
6. Support the student's learning by reviewing and responding to process recordings and other practicum seminar assignments.
7. Assess the student's progress and set goals for professional development as documented each semester in the practicum evaluation form.
8. For new practicum instructors, complete the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI).

Seminar for Field Instruction (SIFI)

Practicum instructors must have completed the Seminar in Practicum Instruction (SIFI) offered by Southern or another CSWE-accredited social work program. SIFI introduces practicum instructors to the MSW social work curriculum, the purpose of practicum education, and the types of educational experiences expected of students. Practicum instructors enrich their skills in social work supervision and educational assessment through a process of reciprocal learning and mutual support. The SIFI course at Southern is free of charge to practicum instructors who are supervising Southern students. SIFI instructors are eligible for up to 9 CEUs upon completion of the SIFI certificate.

Library Access for Practicum Instructors

Practicum instructors are offered full privileges at Buley Library, including in-person and online access to collections. Practicum instructors may apply for the multipurpose University [ID Card](#), which may be used for borrowing books in person and for online access to journals, databases, and other resources.

Students

Practicum students are expected to serve as representatives of Southern Connecticut State University; to promote the purposes, values, and ethics of the social work profession; and to demonstrate social work professional standards and behaviors, academic standards, and practicum education standards, as specified in this *Handbook*.

Students' practicum assignments will vary according to the needs of agencies and clients; the types of agencies and programs; and the student's preparation and skill for social work practice. The first or generalist practicum consists of 400 hours or 14 hours per week that typically include up to six direct client contact hours. The second or specialist practicum consists of 550 hours or 18 hours per week that typically include up to 12 direct client contact hours.

Additional assignments include responsibilities for process recording and documentation, policy practice and research, staff meetings, training and professional development sessions, and social work supervision. All practicum assignments and responsibilities should relate to the social work competencies and behaviors as specified in the practicum educational contract.

Responsibilities of Students

Practicum students have responsibilities to:

1. Identify themselves as social work students or interns in interactions with clients and colleagues.
2. Respect professional boundaries in the use of electronic communications and social media, including refraining from personal use of cell phones on site.

3. Conform to agency policies and regulations, with particular attention to client confidentiality.
4. Collaborate with their practicum instructor in planning assignments related to social work competencies and behaviors and developing the practicum educational contract.
5. Complete process recordings and other documentation, as assigned.
6. Participate actively in the supervision process, including developing an agenda for weekly supervision.
7. Collaborate with the practicum instructor in formative and summative evaluations of practice, including preparation of the practicum evaluation form.

Practicum Attendance

Students are responsible for scheduling, completing, and documenting the required minimum hours for the practicum (400 for the generalist practicum; 550 hours for the specialist practicum), and they should review the calendar with the practicum instructor at the beginning of each semester to schedule their hours. A minimum of 75% of the scheduled practicum hours must be completed in-person, on-site at the agency. Students must document completed hours on the practicum attendance form, which is submitted each month to the practicum seminar.

Students typically are not required to attend the practicum during agency or University holidays or during the University spring vacation. Should the agency be open on days when the University is closed, then students are expected at the practicum. During the winter intersession between fall and spring semesters, students may take up to two weeks' vacation from their practicum. Students and the practicum instructor determine the student's vacation schedule according to agency and client needs.

Students who must miss practicum days due to illness, a death in the family, or other emergency are responsible for notifying the practicum instructor and planning for clients. Students do not need to make up excused absences if they will meet the total number of required practicum hours by the end of the fall or spring semester.

Seminar Instructors

Students in a practicum are simultaneously enrolled in a practicum seminar (SWK 570, 571, 574, or 575). The social work faculty member who instructs the practicum seminar serves as the *faculty liaison* between the MSW program and the practicum site for the students in the seminar class.

Responsibilities of Seminar Instructors

In their role as faculty liaison, seminar instructors have responsibilities to:

1. Introduce themselves by email to practicum instructors at the beginning of the semester.
2. Conduct at least one site visit at the agency per semester with each student and practicum instructor and submit the [site visit form](#).
3. Support students and practicum instructors in completing the practicum education contract.
4. Monitor students' progress in the practicum by means of class discussions and seminar assignments.

5. Facilitate a mutual aid process of peer supervision in seminar and assist students in identifying issues to raise in supervision with the practicum instructor.
6. Maintain open communications with students and practicum instructors, including offering consultations outside of class times or regular office hours.
7. Determine students' grades based on their seminar assignments and the practicum evaluation form.
8. Consult with the Practicum Education office when a student is experiencing serious difficulties in the practicum or when the practicum instructor or agency is not providing the student with appropriate supervision and educational opportunities.

Site Visits

The practicum seminar instructor visits the student and practicum instructor at the agency at least twice during the academic year, once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester, with additional consultation as needed. Site visits may be conducted in person or online. Practicum instructors and students are welcome to reach out to the seminar instructor throughout the semester with any questions or concerns.

The agenda for the first semester site visit includes completing the student's practicum education contract, helping in planning practicum assignments in relation to social work competencies and behaviors, and responding to questions or concerns. The agenda for the second semester site visit includes reviewing the student's progress, updating the practicum educational contract, and setting goals for further learning. Practicum seminar instructors are responsible for documenting their site visits each semester by submitting the [site visit form](#) to the Practicum Education office.

Grading

Students' performance in the practicum is evaluated at the end of each semester by the agency-based practicum instructor, who submits the practicum evaluation form. However, it is the responsibility of the seminar instructor to review the practicum evaluation and to determine the student's seminar grade. A passing grade in the practicum seminar indicates that the student has satisfactorily completed all seminar assignments and requirements and has earned a passing score on their practicum evaluation form.

Employment-Based Practicums

Students who wish to use their place of employment as a practicum site must apply to the Practicum Education office for an employment-based practicum. An employment-based practicum may be approved for one of the student's two practicums. For advanced standing students, an employment-based practicum may be approved for either their BSW or MSW practicum.

Employment-based practicum sites must meet criteria for approval as practicum sites, and practicum instructors or supervisors in employment-based practicums must meet criteria for approval as practicum instructors. Responsibilities of practicum instructors and students are the same in employment-based practicums as in nonemployment-based practicums. Employment-based practicums must afford students with opportunities to meet the nine social work competencies and related behaviors as defined by the Council on Social Work Education and the Department of Social Work.

Students in employment-based practicums must receive one hour of weekly scheduled supervision that is dedicated specifically to their practicum and to their demonstration of social work competencies and behaviors as specified on the practicum education contract. Supervision of the students' practicum must be separate from supervision of their employment. Agencies are encouraged to provide students with a different supervisor for their practicum than the supervisor for their employment, if possible. Evaluations of students' performance in the practicum must be separate from evaluations for purposes of employment. Practicum evaluations are based the student's demonstration of social work competencies and behaviors as specified on the practicum evaluation form.

The generalist practicum consists of 400 hours or about 14 hours per week through the fall and spring semesters. The specialist practicum consists of 550 hours or about 18 hours per week through the fall and spring semesters. The employer has the discretion to allow students to accomplish practicum hours during the student's regularly scheduled hours of employment or to require that some or all practicum hours be performed outside and in addition to the student's employment hours.

Students who are compensated by their employer for their practicum hours will not be eligible to apply for or receive federal work study funds for those same hours.

Challenges of Employment-Based Practicums

Employment-based practicums offer both benefits and risks for students as they balance full-time employment with their social work education. Employment-based practicums ease scheduling challenges and assist students financially by allowing for paid practicum hours. At the same time, however, students in employment-based practicums assume the unique challenges of holding dual roles as students and as employees.

Agencies that host employment-based practicums agree to separate the student's practicum responsibilities from their employment responsibilities, but employers may not always distinguish between the student's roles. Employment-based students may be assumed to have more experience or expertise than other student interns. Students in employment-based practicums who leave their employment may risk losing their practicum as well, and students who have difficulties in the practicum may jeopardize their employed position. Students who lose their employment-based practicum may be required to postpone completion of practicum hours until the following academic year.

It is therefore important for students in employment-based practicums to reach out to their practicum instructor, their seminar instructor, and/or the Practicum Education office if they anticipate or experience difficulties in managing their dual roles.