



MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Updated Spring 2024

Welcome to the Master of Social Work Program at Northern Kentucky University! The policies and procedures provided in this handbook pertain to the Master of Social Work (MSW) Program. This handbook should be used in conjunction with the NKU Graduate Catalog available on the NKU website at catalog.nku.edu.

Mission Statement of the Master of Social Work Program (MSW)

is appropriate for advanced social work practice and consistent with Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) *EPAS Policy 1.0.1* education and accreditation policies. The mission statement of the MSW program is as follows:

The Social Work program educates competent and ethical Master of Social Work graduates who demonstrate leadership and social work values in their communities and their profession, toward advancing social and economic justice.

Mission Statement of the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS)

CHHS is a globally inclusive leader for student-centered learning that improves the quality of life of the populations we serve. The vision of CHHS is to provide innovative, evidence-based education and scholarship that empowers students to advocate foLang(s)-60(to (te)-57(fo)-6(Lang4(ge)4(2



1. Admissions/Advising

1.1. Orientation to the Program. The Social Work program provides an orientation to newly admitted MSW students

There are nine program professional competencies to be demonstrated by MSW students before graduation. These competencies are outlined in CSWE, Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards, 2015 and provided below.

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4. Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Each competency (above) has practice behaviors at the foundational and advanced practice levels. These practice behaviors can be accessed in the NKU MSW Field Manual learning contracts.

MSW Programs and Courses

Standard MSW Degree Details:

This program includes sixty (60) semester hours, and all online courses are taught in 7-week sessions. This program includes 900 hours of supervised clinical practice in a field agency which will prepare students for licensure as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) or Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) in every state. Admissions may be approved for fall, spring, or summer semesters. This program can be completed in approximately two (2) years if students follow the full-time advising schedule.

Standard MSW Program Courses	Advanced Standing MSW Program Courses
<p style="text-align: center;">Foundational Year</p> <p>Foundation Content Courses SWK 602: Human Behavior & the Social Environment SWK 603: Social Work Ethics SWK 604: Contemporary Social Welfare Policy SWK 605: Inclusion, Oppression, & Social Work</p> <p>Foundation Practice Courses SWK 631/632/633: Practice I: Generalist Social Work Practice SWK 634: Practice II: Communities & Organizations SWK 635: Practice III: Introduction to Assessment</p> <p>Foundation Research SWK 640: Social Work Research</p> <p>Foundation Field SWK 650: Field Experience I</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced/Clinical Practice Courses</p> <p>SWK 636: Practice IV: Clinical Behavioral Health SWK 637: Practice V: Groups SWK 670: Behavioral Health Disorders & Diagnosis I SWK 671: Behavioral Health Disorders & Diagnosis II SWK 684: Trauma-Focused Care I</p> <p>Advanced Research SWK 641: Applied Research I SWK 642: Applied Research II</p> <p>Advanced Field SWK 651: Field Experience II SWK 652: Field Experience III 1 Approved Elective</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced Year</p> <p>Advanced/Clinical Practice Courses SWK 636: Practice IV: Clinical Behavioral Health SWK 637: Practice V: Groups SWK 670: Behavioral Health Disorders & Diagnosis I SWK 671: Behavioral Health Disorders & Diagnosis II SWK 684: Trauma-Focused Care I</p> <p>Advanced Research SWK 641: Applied Research I SWK 642: Applied Research II</p>	

It is important to remember that our technology and social media use is representative of who we are as professionals and is representative of the School of Social Work at Northern Kentucky University. All technology and social media use should respect the confidentiality, privacy, and dignity of all clients. Evidence of violating ethical technology and social media use is subject to faculty review and may result in

- b.) Use professional judgment when considering a disclosure of information that is very personal in a class or team setting. This time is not to be used for your own therapy or treatment. If you are struggling with challenges, please see the instructor privately for information regarding additional campus resources.
- c.) Never use the names of clients or share identifying client information in a classroom or team setting.

D. Competence. *Apply yourself to all of your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, and according to the timelines and expectations established by your instructors.*

Components:

- a.) Participate in your courses with the appropriate books, materials, and syllabus, including locating and accessing additional materials as warranted.
- b.) Seek out appropriate support in a timely manner when having difficulties to ensure success in each class.
- c.) Utilize available campus resources, including the information technology help desk, the writing center, and Stealy Library.
- d.) Own responsibility for the quality of completed coursework.
- e.) Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal challenges that may impact effectiveness with clients, and actively address those areas.

E. Integrity. *Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors. Consistently strive to improve this ability as a lifelong learning goal.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain professionalism in interactions with peers, instructors, and campus and community partners.
- b.) Demonstrate commitment to positive, respectful, and honest interactions.
- c.) Self-evaluate responsibility and commitment on a regular basis, and address any identified areas for improvement.
- d.) Maintain integrity when completing all coursework.

F. Academic Accountability. *Commit yourself to learning to communicate in a professional context.*

Components:

- a.) Do your own work, and take credit only for your own work. This includes paraphrases and citations and giving credit where credit is due.
- b.) Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed, and actively work to address those areas.
- c.) Complete work in a timely manner, and incorporate time to review your own work and any needed resources before submission.
- d.) Seek out and benefit from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.

G. Commitment to Diversity. *Strive to become more open to people of all backgrounds, abilities, and orientations.*

- c.) Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact, and an active engagement with evolving standards and expectations.

H. Communication. *Strive to improve non-verbal, verbal, and written communication skills. These skills are essential in our professional interactions.*

Components:

- a.) Present yourself in a positive and appropriate manner. This includes professional appearance and means that you should not wear offensive or inappropriate attire in a professional setting.
- b.) Actively maintain communication with classmates, instructors, and members of the NKU community. Self-isolation and a lack of communication are impediments to professional development.
- c.) Practice positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills in non-verbal, verbal, and written communication. This includes but is not limited to: in-person interactions, class discussions, and email correspondence.
- d.) Actively demonstrate appropriate body language, empathy, and listening skills in professional interactions.

I. Social Justice. *Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all persons.* Components:

- a.) Develop and demonstrate an understanding of how personal and institutional factors impede the experience of social justice.
- b.) Strive to learn about and participate in social justice initiatives.
- c.) Seek and embrace learning opportunities about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Required Course Progression Policy.

Students are required to follow the course progression in their academic plan/advising schedule as

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the submitted student work to evaluate student understanding of and engagement with the course content. This is required so that the university has documented evidence that each student has demonstrated mastery of the course materials. This submitted evidence of student mastery is then utilized for the university to award degrees to students to indicate that the students have developed expertise in their chosen fields. If a student does poorly on submitted class work to such an extent that it has heavily impacted their grade(s), it is critically important that the student re-takes the course so that they can master the required content. All

Respect and Civility
Confidentiality
Competence
Integrity
Academic Accountability
Commitment to Diversity

These professional expectations of student behavior are presented in greater detail on pages 11-13 of this handbook.

Standards Evaluation (Appendix A). Students will be rated as a component of every following MSW course.

will be considered deficient in professional performance and may be subject to Student Remediation.

Abstinence from Unacceptable Behaviors.

Unacceptable behavior is inconsistent with the behavior described by the School of Social Work at NKU, as mandated by the Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In determining whether the behavior is acceptable or unacceptable, consider how you would feel or react if you were on the receiving end of the behavior in question. The information below provides further guidance on what is unacceptable behavior in the School of Social Work at Northern Kentucky University. This behavior is unacceptable towards peers, faculty, field supervisors, or any other person or entity with which you are interacting as a social worker/social work student. Examples of Unacceptable Behavior which are considered unacceptable in the School of Social Work at NKU include (but are not limited to) the following:

- a) Aggressive or abusive behavior, such as making threatening gestures or engaging in actual violence or assault
- b) Verbal abuse, such as yelling, screaming, or using abusive or offensive language
- c) Bullying, harassment, stalking, or intimidation
- d) Being under the influence of illicit drugs or impaired by alcohol
- e) Unwelcome physical contact including that of a sexual or threatening nature
- f) Teasing, name-calling, or ridicule
- g) Engaging in malicious gossip or complaints
- h) Producing abusive or harassing notes, emails, telephone calls, text messages
- i) Belittling the opinions of others
- j) Responding poorly to constructive feedback. This includes yelling at instructors, approaching
- k) Using offensive gestures and behavior
- l) Stealing or misuse of university resources
- m) Engaging in inappropriate technology or social media use (see Social Media statement above)

Student Remediation and Retention.

When the School of Social Work Faculty become aware of an academic and/or professional dispositional issue exhibited by a student, an appropriate faculty member will first discuss the concern(s) raised with the student directly. Examples of such concerns include deficiencies in the areas of academic performance, clinical effectiveness or judgment, or interpersonal functioning.

If the faculty member determines that the discussion(s) resolved the concern, no further action will be required. If such discussions do not resolve the concern, the following procedures will be implemented:

1. The faculty member will document the specific concerns and complete a Professional Performance Evaluation (PPE).
2. The faculty member will provide the student with a copy of the documentation and the PPE.
3. The faculty member will provide written notification to the MSW Program Director regarding the identified concerns.
4. The faculty member will consult with the MSW Program Advisor, the MSW Program Director, and any associated faculty who wish to contribute to developing a Professional Development Plan (PDP). The PDP will contain the following elements (see Appendices B and C for examples):
 - a. Expectations for the student;
 - b. Specific behaviors required of the student;
 - c.
 - d. Consequences for not meeting the expectations and behaviors outlined in the PDP.
5. As soon as is practical, the student and the issuing faculty will meet to discuss the PDP.
 - a. The issuing faculty and the student will sign the PDP form to verify their understanding of the presented concerns, the required remedial actions, and the schedule for completing them.
 - b. Both the student and issuing faculty will receive copies of the signed PDP, and a copy will be
6. If the student fails to show reasonable progress in meeting the conditions of the PDP, as determined by the issuing faculty, the student will be required to attend a review meeting to include the issuing faculty, the academic advisor, and the MSW Program Director.
7. After such a meeting with the student, the issuing faculty and academic advisor will consult the full School of Social Work faculty regarding the development of alternative remedial strategies and/or evaluation of the MSW Program.
 - a. If a new or revised PDP is developed, the new PDP will be signed by the student, the issuing faculty, and the academic advisor, and progress towards completion will be monitored.
 - b. If the SSW faculty determines that a new or revised PDP will not likely help remediate the concerns raised, the student will be informed that they will be dismissed from the MSW Program and cannot enroll in social work courses, even as a non-degree seeking student.
8. The student will be informed of the decision to dismiss them from the MSW Program in writing. The writing will include notice of appeal rights and that they may petition for reinstatement into the program after 12 months. The policies and procedures for pursuing an appeal of such a decision are available here:

Field education is an integral part of the Master of Social Work curriculum. Field education is an internship that takes place in selected agencies and organizations, located throughout Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati, which represent a broad range of social services. Field placements are approved based on the quality of their professional practice, commitment to social justice and to addressing social work problems, interest in participating in professional education, ability to make

Requirements in Field Courses in: Standard MSW & Advanced Standing MSW

In order to successfully complete foundational field the student must successfully complete the entire 300 hours of field placement.

In order to successfully complete advanced field the student must successfully complete both parts of the placement, the entire 600 hours of field placement. Additionally, Field II and III are taken in succession with SWK 652 immediately following SWK 651. Students may not have a gap in between Field II and III. Any exceptions would only be due to extreme circumstances and must be approved by the MSW Program Director and MSW Field Director. Only cases with a one-semester gap in between will be considered for an exception. Students who have paused in their MSW program, and had previously started Field, but withdrew, must retake SWK 651.

If a grade lower than a B- is earned in SWK 651 it will result in the student needing to repeat and successfully pass with a B- or better SWK 651.

If a grade lower than a B- is earned in SWK 652 it will result in the student needing to repeat and successfully pass with a B- or better both SWK 651 and SWK 652.

For example:

Student A receives a C+ in SWK 651. That student must repeat SWK 651 before they will be allowed to move on to SWK 652.

Student B received an A- in SWK 651 but a C in SWK 652. That student must retake SWK 651 as well as SWK 652.

Student C receives a B in SWK 651 and a B- in SWK 652. This student has successfully completed Field II & Field III thus completing all field requirements.

Course List Reference:

SWK 650- Field Experience I

SWK 651- Field Experience II

SWK 652- Field Experience III

Additional Policies:

No student is permitted to register for field I or field II (SWK 650 or SWK 651) without consent and approval of the MSW Field Director. The student must have secured a placement in order to be approved. Student should obtain permission from the Field Director who will then send an email to MSW Graduate Coordinator requesting a permit for student.

Students will stay with the same field instructor for SWK 651 and SWK 652 and in the same section. Students delaying foundational field will not be permitted to take any classes considered advanced, which may result in the student not taking any classes until foundational field is completed.

Northern Kentucky University
Criteria for Professional Performance Evaluation

School of Social Work

Student Name: _____

A. Accountability. *Maintain a strong presence in all courses and demonstrate preparedness and engagement with course materials and feedback.*

Components:

- a.) Prompt, positive, engaged, and prepared engagement.
- b.) Prompt, positive, and prepared participation.
- c.) Completion of, and engagement with, all course assignments and materials.
- d.) Individual responsibility for course assignments, instructions, and expectations.
- e.) Welcome and incorporate constructive feedback

Please enter a checkmark next to the most appropriate assessment for each component included below.

Components	Description	Place check below if the assessment is	Description	Place check below if the assessment
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C.	Did not complete and engage with all course assignments and materials.		Did complete and engage with all course assignments and materials.		Worked actively and consistently to complete and engage with all course assignments and materials.	
D.	Did not demonstrate individual responsibility for course assignments, instructions, and expectations.		Did demonstrate individual responsibility for course assignments, instructions, and expectations.		Demonstrated consistent individual responsibility for course assignments, instructions, and expectations.	
E.	Did not welcome and incorporate constructive feedback.		Did welcome and incorporate constructive feedback.		Solicited, welcomed, and incorporated constructive feedback.	

B. Respect/Civility. *Treat all peers, instructors, and community and campus contacts with dignity and respect at all times.*

Components:

- a.) Pay attention while others are communicating, and pay attention to understand rather than immediately respond.
- b.) Address faculty members by professional titles, unless otherwise requested.
- c.) Provide feedback and engagement in a constructive and supportive manner.
- d.) Demonstrate professionalism and kindness in all professional communications.
- d.) Approach conflict in a positive and cooperative manner.
- e.) Actively include team members and classmates in class activities and discussions.

Please enter a checkmark next to the most appropriate assessment for each component included below.

Components	Description	Place check below if the assessment is	Description	Place check below if the assessment	Description	Place check below if the assessment
A.	Did not pay attention while others were communicating, and paid attention to immediately respond rather than to understand.		Paid attention while others were communicating, and paid attention to understand rather than to immediately respond.		Paid obvious attention while others were communicating, and offered feedback and engagement with the communications of others.	

D. Competence. *Apply yourself to all of your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, and according to the timelines and expectations established by your instructors.*

Components:

- a.) Participate in your courses with the appropriate books, materials, and syllabus, including locating and accessing additional materials as warranted.
- b.) Seek out appropriate support in a timely manner when having difficulties to ensure success in each class.
- c.)

- b.) Demonstrate commitment to positive, respectful, and honest interactions.
- c.) Self-evaluate responsibility and commitment on a regular basis, and address any identified areas for improvement.
- d.) Maintain integrity when completing all coursework.

Please enter a checkmark next to the most appropriate assessment for each component included below.

Components	Description	Place check below if the assessment is	Description	Place check below if	Description	Place check below if the assessment
A.	Did not maintain professionalism in interactions with peers, instructors, and campus and community partners.		Did maintain professionalism in interactions with peers, instructors, and campus and community partners.		Modeled consistent professionalism in interactions with peers, instructors, and campus and community partners.	
B.	Did not demonstrate commitment to positive, respectful, and honest interactions.					

D.	Did not seek out and benefit from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.		Did seek out and benefit from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.	Actively and consistently sought out and benefitted from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.	
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G. Commitment to Diversity. *Strive to become more open to people, populations, ideas, and creeds with which you may not agree. Embrace diversity as a positive component of our society.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain speech and professional interactions that are respectful and kind.

Appendix B: Professional Development Plan, Field Example

Northern Kentucky University
Professional Development Plan (FIELD EXAMPLE)

School of Social Work

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Student email & NKU ID: _____

For you to continue to progress toward receiving your MSW degree at Northern Kentucky University, you are required to engage in the

A. Accountability. *Maintain a strong presence in all courses and demonstrate preparedness and engagement with course materials and feedback.*

Components:

Components:

- a.) Do your own work, and take credit only for your own work. This includes paraphrases and citations and giving credit where credit is due.
- b.) Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed, and actively work to address those areas.
- c.) Complete work in a timely manner, and incorporate time to review your own work and any needed resources before submission.
- d.) Seek out and benefit from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.

G. Commitment to Diversity. *Strive to become more open to people, populations, ideas, and creeds with which you may not agree. Embrace diversity as a positive component of our society.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain speech and professional interactions that are respectful and kind.
- b.) Exhibit a willingness to serve with and learn about and from diverse clientele, colleagues, and communities.
- c.) Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact, and an active engagement with evolving standards and expectations.

H. Communication. *Strive to improve non-verbal, verbal, and written communication skills. These skills are essential in our professional interactions.*

Components:

- a.) Present yourself in a positive and appropriate manner. This includes professional appearance and means that you should not wear offensive or inappropriate attire in a professional setting.
- b.) Actively maintain communication with classmates, instructors, and members of the NKU community. Self-isolation and a lack of communication

c.) Seek and embrace learning opportunities about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

To successfully engage in the aforementioned behaviors, the student will:

- 1.) Attend therapy sessions with a licensed mental health professional to improve interpersonal dynamics that relate to the therapy and ability to comprehend, accept, incorporate, and apply supervisor feedback in clinical practice. A letter from the mental health professional indicating that you have successfully addressed the aforementioned issues in therapy will be required before you can re-enroll in practicum. Please present this letter to the MSW Program Director within 2 weeks of attempting to register for the practicum course.
- 2.) -related workshops that are preapproved by the MSW Program Director before you can re-enroll in your practicum course. Please present proof of having completed these workshops to the MSW Program Director within 2 weeks of attempting to register for the practicum course.
- 3.) Write a 10-page (double-spaced, American Psychological Association style) essay, which applies the supervision information you learned in your workshops to the supervision conflicts you were confronted with in practicum. In your essay, you should especially focus on issues related to accepting supervisor feedback. The faculty will evaluate this statement, and you will not be able to register for practicum until the faculty is satisfied that you y is satisfied that you TJETQdkuG{foc}7(us on i)-2(sus on the f)5(a)-5(c)4(ult)-3(y is s)-3

I understand and agree to the conditions of this document. Any breach of this agreement constitutes grounds for being removed from the social work program. I understand that I can appeal this plan *prior* to signing the agreement/plan. I understand and agree to all of the conditions of this document. If I do not follow through on completing all of the tasks outlined in this contract within 1 year, I understand that I will be terminated from the social work policy and am clear that there are certain behaviors that, if violated, will supersede this agreement and may result in immediate removal from the program (e.g., ethics violations).

Date

Student Signature

Date

Faculty Representative

- e.) Approach conflict in a positive and cooperative manner.
- f.) Actively include team members and classmates in class activities and discussions.

C. Confidentiality. *Treat any personal information that you learn about a peer, instructor, or client as strictly confidential, unless*

Components:

- a.) Do your own work, and take credit only for your own work. This includes paraphrases and citations and giving credit where credit is due.
- b.) Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed, and actively work to address those areas.
- c.) Complete work in a timely manner, and incorporate time to review your own work and any needed resources before submission.
- d.) Seek out and benefit from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.

G. Commitment to Diversity. *Strive to become more open to people, populations, ideas, and creeds with which you may not agree. Embrace diversity as a positive component of our society.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain speech and professional interactions that are respectful and kind.
- b.) Exhibit a willingness to serve with and learn about and from diverse clientele, colleagues, and communities.
- c.) Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact, and an active engagement with evolving standards and expectations.

H. Communication. *Strive to improve non-verbal, verbal, and written communication skills. These skills are essential in our professional interactions.*

Components:

- a.) Present yourself in a positive and appropriate manner. This includes professional appearance and means that you should not wear offensive or inappropriate attire in a professional setting.
- b.) Actively maintain communication with classmates, instructors, and members of the NKU community. Self-isolation and a lack of communication are impediments to professional development.
- c.) Practice positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills in non-verbal, verbal, and written communication. This includes but is not limited to: in-person interactions, class discussions, and email correspondence.
- d.) Actively demonstrate appropriate body language, empathy, and listening skills.

- c.) Seek and embrace learning opportunities about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

To successfully engage in the aforementioned behaviors, the student will:

- 1.) Actively utilize available supports including the NKU Writing Center, Steely Library, and additional identified support options to develop and strengthen appropriate academic skills as mentioned previously in this document (e.g., academic accountability). The student must demonstrate the ability to locate and utilize information and resources, comprehend course materials and expectations, and apply instructor feedback in coursework. The student must document the utilization of available resources, including dates and times of said utilization, to a satisfactory level of at least once per week for a minimum of four weeks. Please present this documentation, along with the revised coursework, to the MSW Program Director within 2 weeks of attempting to register for the corresponding course.
- 2.) Be required to attend 6 hours worth of professionalism-related workshops that are preapproved by the MSW Program Director. Professionalism-related workshops, including relevant information and contact information regarding said workshops. The MSW Program Director must approve any proposed workshops *prior to the student's participation* in order for the workshops to count toward this requirement. Please present proof of having completed these workshops to the MSW Program Director within 2 weeks of attempting to register for the corresponding course.
- 3.) Write a 10-page (double-spaced, American Psychological Association style) essay, which applies the professionalism information

Appendix D: Student Recommendation Request Form

Student Recommendation Request Form

Thank you for contacting me regarding a recommendation letter. In order for me to consider this request, please share the following with me in *one single email* at least three weeks prior to the due date for your recommendation (this excludes university holidays and breaks):

1. Please fill out the attached table for each program for which you would like to request a recommendation letter.
2. Please send me a copy of your updated resume.
3. Please send me any other relevant information or materials.
4. Please include this additional information in your email to me:
 - a. what classes you took with me as the course instructor
 - b. when those classes were (semester/year)

1.)						
2.)						
3.)						