



**School of Social Work**  
**MSW Program Handbook Addendum**  
**2023-2024**



Revised May 2023

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## **PART A: INTRODUCTION TO THE SIMMONS MSW PROGRAM**

This MSW Program Handbook Addendum is the MSW student's guide to the Master's in Social Work degree program at Simmons. This policy manual contains essential information to help ensure your success in the program. Students are responsible for knowing and following the policies of The School of Social Work (see the SSW Graduate Student Handbook) and Simmons University (see the university website for more information). Some MSW Program policies will differ depending upon whether you are enrolled in the campus-based or online program option. Students should consult documents that are specific to their program option including their respective Practicum placement manuals. Please read all documents carefully.

The information in this Handbook is subject to change, and the SSW reserves the right to change any policy or procedure without notice.

### **MSW Program Mission Statement**

The mission of the MSW program is to prepare masters level professional practitioners with skills for clinical social work practice in a complex, multicultural world using knowledge based on evidence-informed and practicum-informed practice, in which clinical practice is defined, in part, as a disciplined process for collaboration, in service of social, emotional, and behavioral change for individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities. This educational experience, consistent with the history and philosophy of the social work profession, is grounded in a values perspective that emphasizes client strengths, actively opposes all forms of oppression and supports social, economic, and environmental justice. The curriculum is designed to help students develop competence, critical thinking, and the ability to attend to clients' presenting concerns and build on their strengths, as well as cultural responsiveness and self-awareness.

### **Goals Statement**

Students learn multiple social work roles and skills necessary to be effective within evolving areas of practice. Graduates will be able to work with a variety of populations and social issues, using a broad and flexible array of evidence-informed interventions at an advanced level. They will have the ability to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to facilitate development and change in the service of social, economic, and environmental justice. Graduates will be prepared to practice with an appreciation for the dignity and worth of the person and the importance of human relationships; they will learn to practice with a sense of integrity and a commitment to supporting human rights and actively opposing structures and practices that oppress and marginalize individuals, groups, and communities. The MSW program goals are directly linked to our mission statement.

### **MSW Program Goals**

1. Provide high quality education for generalist practice and a concentration in clinical social work.
2. Create and sustain a learning environment that encourages critical thinking and problem-solving, promotes cultural responsiveness and self-awareness, and values the

contributions of all stakeholders to the educational experience.

3. Enact a program culture that creates and sustains a learning environment in which we critically self-reflect on issues of human rights, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, class, national origin, immigration status, religion, the intersection among these factors, and the roles they play in education and the practice of social work.
4. Infuse all activities of the MSW program, including the implicit and explicit curricula, with the values and ethics of the social work profession.
5. Prepare students for competent ethical practice in a complex, multicultural world and a rapidly changing global environment.
6. Promote the development of professional knowledge, skills, and accountability through the use of evidence-informed practice and a commitment to life-long learning.

### **Definition of Clinical Social Work Practice**

A disciplined process for collaboration in service of social, emotional, and behavioral change for individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities, clinical social work draws on knowledge of human development, relational and group process, cultural learning, and social policies and practices. It employs evidence-informed methods that facilitate change through dialogue and collective action. It is grounded in a history of commitment to social justice and guided by a professional code of ethics.

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### MSW Program Administration and Staff 2023-2024

*\* Below are faculty and staff who you may engage with at some point during your time in the MSW program. Please refer to this table when referencing roles listed in this document.*

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## **PART B: MSW PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Section B1: Academic and Professional Advising**

MSW students are assigned an Academic Advisor upon enrollment at the beginning of each academic year. Students in Practicum placement are assigned to a Practicum Education Liaison (FL) and also can schedule academic advising appointments with an Academic Advisor.

#### ***Director of Student Support***

The Director of Student Support oversees the academic advisors, student resources, and student disciplinary issues for MSW students.

#### ***Associate Director of Student Support***

The Associate Director of Student Support organizes community career events (licensing, resume and interviewing workshops, recruitment fair), professional development opportunities, and oversees all MSW student government volunteers and affinity groups.

#### ***Academic Advising***

Academic Advising addresses student questions regarding academic progression, course selection, status (leaves, withdrawals, change of program option) and academic performance issues. Additionally, Academic Advising facilitates referrals to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS), the Writing Center and the Student Assistance Program (SAP). Academic Advising also provides individual professional advising regarding work-life balance, role transition and post-graduate social work careers.

#### ***How can I find out who my Academic Advisor is?***

Students can email [swadvising@simmons.edu](mailto:swadvising@simmons.edu) to obtain the name and contact information of their assigned Academic Advisors.

#### ***Practicum Liaisons***

The Practicum Education Liaison provides additional advising pertaining to Practicum education and professional development issues and questions. (See the SSW Practicum Manual for a full description of Practicum Liaison role.)

#### ***Advising for Certificates, Licensure, and Special Programs***

Students in certificate programs can also meet with the Faculty Certificate Coordinators for advisement pertaining to elective choices and career options. Students can email [swadvising@simmons.edu](mailto:swadvising@simmons.edu) for the contact information for the appropriate certificate coordinator.

### **Section B2: MSW Course Registration Policies and Procedures**

#### ***Requirement to Follow Course Program Plans***

It is the student's responsibility to follow their program plan, which will depend on type (e.g., full-time, extended, accelerated, or advanced standing) and enrollment in a special certificate or licensure program. Any deviation from the original program plan must be approved by their

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Academic Advisor. Deviation from the original plan can hinder students' ability to obtain a certificate and delay graduation. Campus-based and online program plans are given at the time of registration; additional copies can be requested from Academic Advising.

### ***Drop/Withdrawal from Practicum Placement After the Add/Drop Period***

To withdraw from Practicum Placement after the add/drop period, the student must receive approval from the Director of Practicum Education, specific to whichever option they are enrolled in, campus-based or online. Students who perform poorly and/or are not making sufficient progress and withdraw after the add/drop period may be given a grade that reflects their performance at the time of their withdrawal.

### ***Changing Sections of Two-Semester Courses***

MSW students are required to remain in the same section of the two semesters of year-long class for which they registered (SW/SWO 421 A&B, SW/SWO 424 A&B). Students must register for each class each semester (Fall and Spring for campus-based).

### ***Courses that Must be Taken Concurrently***

MSW students are required to register for the appropriate Practicum and practice courses concurrently.

### ***Summer Semester Course Registration Policy (Campus-based Students)***

MSW students are not permitted to be enrolled in more than two courses during the summer semester.

### ***Course and Practicum Placement Schedule (Campus-based Students)***

To accommodate Practicum placement attendance for MSW students in their generalist year (M, T, Th/F) and specialist years (M, W, Th/F), courses are offered as follows:

- Monday evenings (generalist and specialist year courses)
- Tuesday daytime (specialist year courses only)
- Tuesday evenings (generalist and specialist year courses)
- Wednesday daytime (generalist year courses only)
- Wednesday evenings (generalist and specialist year courses)
- Thursday evenings (generalist and specialist year courses)
- Friday daytime (generalist and specialist year courses)

Note that campus-based courses are not offered Monday daytime, Thursday daytime, Friday evenings, Saturday, or Sunday.

### ***Independent Studies***

Independent study for course credit is not available to MSW students.

### ***Auditing Courses***

1. Auditing is permitted for MSW courses that are offered in the campus-based platform.



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2. Auditing is **not** permitted for MSW courses offered in the online platform.
3. To audit a course in the MSW campus-based platform, the following conditions apply:
  - a. There must be space in the course.
  - b. Registration to audit is permitted no earlier than two weeks prior to the start of course, not before.
  - c. Only one class may be audited per semester.
  - d. The cost to audit is the equivalent of one credit of tuition.
  - e. Auditing students are typically exempt from submitting papers and exams, but are expected to attend all class sessions, complete the readings, and meet any additional requirements at the discretion of the instructor.
  - f. The audit will appear on the student transcript; students receive no grade and no credit.
  - g. The audit will not fulfill any degree requirements.
  - h. Students may not register to audit a course in the MSW program and then change the status from audit to enrolled.
  - i. Non-degree seeking students cannot audit classes.
  - j. Instructors cannot approve an audit for a student who is not registered in the course.
  - k. Campus-based MSW students interested in auditing should contact Academic Advising ([SWAdvising@simmons.edu](mailto:SWAdvising@simmons.edu)).

### **Section B3: Evaluating Academic Performance and Program Progression**

Students are expected to maintain a B (3.0) grade average throughout their MSW program. Courses are graded using the A-F grading system. MSW students must take all classes for a letter grade with the exception of social work Practicum education courses in which students are assigned a mark of Pass, Marginal Pass or Fail. The numerical equivalent for each grade is as follows:

#### ***Course Grades Below a “B”***

Any MSW student earning a grade lower than a B in a course will be notified by their Academic Advisor or program administrators for a Level 2 review to create an Action Plan. Any MSW student earning a grade below a B- is required to retake the class and earn a grade of B or better. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting with their Advisor no later than the first week of the subsequent term.

#### ***Resubmission of Graded Assignments***

MSW students may, at the instructor’s sole discretion, be given the option of resubmitting an assignment that has received a grade of “B-” or below. However, final course assignments may not be resubmitted.

#### ***Non-Matriculation Grade Policy***

A non-matriculated student must receive a “B” or better in their first class to remain eligible to take a second class in the MSW program. Online students may not enter the program as a non-matriculated student.

## Section B4: Academic Standing and Program Progression to Graduation

### *MSW Degree Completion Policy*

Campus-based MSW students enroll in the full-time program or in the extended program. The full-time program is completed in 2 years. The extended program is completed in 2.5, 3, or 4 years.

Online MSW students enroll in accelerated, full-time, or extended programs. The accelerated program is completed in 4 terms; full-time program in 6 terms; and extended program in 8 terms.

If a student chooses to change status from the full-time to the extended program, the student's Advisor must be consulted. The student should schedule a meeting with their Academic Advisor to create an alternative plan for program completion.

All MSW degree requirements must be completed within five years of matriculation. Academic coursework completed five or more years prior to credit transfer (typically the date of matriculation) does not count toward degree requirements, and must typically be repeated.

### *Academic Probation*

Poor academic performance, and poor performance in external internships are grounds for a student to be placed on academic probation. For the purposes of academic probation, in the MSW program poor performance is defined as: two grades below a B, a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0, or an MP in Practicum placement (MSW). An MSW student on academic probation will have a Level 2 review no later than the end of the first week of class of the subsequent semester. The purpose of the meeting is to develop an Action Plan. A copy of the plan, written by the Advisor, must be forwarded to the appropriate program administrator. **If a student does not attend a Level 2 review, an Action Plan can be made in the student's absence with the information available up to that point (e.g., administrative withdrawal of the student's registration).**

### *Academic Probation or Dismissal Due to Practicum Education Grades*

Practicum grades (Pass, Marginal Pass, Fail) are not factored into the cumulative GPA; however one grade of Marginal Pass (MP) will result in academic probation and two grades of MP will result in dismissal. One grade of Fail (F) will result in dismissal. See the Practicum Education Manual for full Practicum education grading policy.

### *Removal from Academic Probation*

To be removed from academic probation, an MSW student must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher by the following term.

### ***Program Progression Requirements***

- An MSW student is allowed to repeat a maximum of two courses in which they have earned a grade below a B.
- The same course cannot be enrolled in more than twice.
- Students who have utilized their repeat allowances and then go on to earn a grade below a “B” will be dismissed from the program.
- Students are not allowed to withdraw from the same course more than once.
- MSW Students must complete the program in five years.
- MSW students who do not register for classes in consecutive semesters (excluding summer semester for campus-based students) and are not on an official leave, or have not officially withdrawn, will be administratively withdrawn by Simmons. A new admissions application is required to be considered for return to the active student status.
- MSW students must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 to be eligible for graduation.

### **MSW Students’ Rights to Participate in Academic and Student Affairs Policymaking**

MSW students have the right to be active participants in academic and student affairs policy making and to have an impact on shaping their program, community and educational experience.

The right to participate in academic and student affairs policy making is expressed and implemented in students’ participation on various SSW Committees; in their participation in student -initiated and run organizations; and in their participation on the Student Leadership Council. Students are part of the governance of the MSW through their participation in these various groups and committees where they have the opportunity to play a role in shaping policies and initiating community activities.

### **Students’ Responsibilities to Participate in Academic and Student Affairs Policymaking**

Students are responsible for contributing to shaping their learning environment by participating in academic and student affairs policy making. To that end, students are encouraged to take part in their student community through membership on committees, in student groups and other ad hoc activities.

### **MSW Committees**

In the beginning of the fall semester, students receive an email soliciting their involvement for MSW committees. Student volunteers are matched with their area of interest and students agree to make a commitment to attend regularly scheduled committee meetings. In addition to expressing their own concerns at committee meetings, volunteers are tasked with soliciting the concerns of their fellow students and then are expected to represent those concerns at the committee meeting. The purpose of student participation on committees is to include student opinion, preference and perspective when making decisions about the curriculum and program policies. Committees include: Assessment, Curriculum, and Academic Standards.

### **Student Groups**

All MSW students are encouraged to start new student affiliation groups and to join existing groups. At the Fall orientation campus students are introduced to student group leaders and are

given information about how to start a new student group. See the MSW portion of the Simmons website for more information about the many student groups within the MSW program.

### **MSW Student Awards**

Simmons School of Social Work confers annual awards to MSW students who have made significant contributions to the SSW community, their agency, or the larger realm of social work. Students, supervisors, faculty and Advisors are invited by the Faculty Award Committee to submit nominations.

#### ***The Shirley Saks Greenberg Award***

This award honors Shirley Saks Greenberg who received her MS degree from Simmons SSW in 1956. Mrs. Greenberg had a gift for combining theoretical perspectives to understanding with clinical practice. She had a particular interest in the area of psychodynamic psychotherapy and clinical casework. She met an untimely death in 1982. Her family established this award in her honor to recognize a first-year student who shows promise in integrating theory with practice, especially practice pertaining to psychodynamic theory. In recent years the scope of the award has been expanded to a broader definition of clinical practice.

#### ***The Iris MacRae Award***

This award was established in 1980 by students, colleagues, alumni and friends to honor Iris MacRae, a member of the Simmons faculty, who devoted the major part of her professional life to teaching and advising students at the school. Her dedication and commitment remain an inspiration to all that knew her. In 1983, the faculty decided that this award should be granted to a student in their final year. Please submit the name of a student and an accompanying letter of support for a student who has made an outstanding achievement in either class or Practicum work.

Examples of Practicum achievement could include special talents in working with a challenging client group, initiation of a special program in the agency, or other evidence of creative achievement in the course of the Practicum work practicum. Class (academic) achievement might consist of overall outstanding performance or particularly creative papers completed for course requirements.

#### ***Achievement in Political Action and Social Justice Award***

This award is given to a student who makes a contribution in the areas of political action and social justice through intervention in a larger system.

#### ***Outstanding Competence in Multicultural Practice***

This award is given to a student for work with a multicultural population, for the education of professional colleagues, program planning, or sensitivity and excellence in cross-cultural practice.

#### ***Faculty Leadership Award***

This award is given at faculty discretion for exemplary school or community leadership. This may be awarded to an individual or group of students.

#### ***The Community Service Award***

This award recognizes special service to the Simmons community by a student or group of students. Nominations may be made by students, faculty, or staff. Note: The Student Advisory Group selects the winner of this award.

***Written Scholarship in Social Work***

This award is given to a student who demonstrates creativity, originality and outstanding scholarship in a written paper. Submitted papers should hold promise for publication.

***The Priscilla Mullen Riley Award***

Established in memory of Professor Emerita Priscilla Mullen Riley, this award honors the dedication, commitment and perseverance of its namesake. Professor Riley experienced significant challenges in her early life, yet went on to have a very successful, rich and rewarding career as a clinical social worker and a social work educator. She was a member of the Simmons Faculty for thirty-four years and the Director of its Practicum Education Department for many years. She was a national leader in promoting the importance and centrality of Practicum education in graduate social work learning.

***Peter Salgo '01 Award***

This endowed fund is established in memory of Peter Salgo '01SW with gifts contributed by friends and family in 2007. This fund will provide an annual award to one or more School of Social Work students upon the completion of their graduate degree from the University. Preference will be given to individuals who, like Mr. Salgo, made the difficult decision to switch careers and obtain a degree with the intent of entering the Practicum of social work.

**PART C: MSW CREDIT TRANSFER & WAIVER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

***Transfer Credits from Another MSW program***

Students entering the MSW program may request to transfer up to six course credits taken as a non-matriculated student at a CSWE accredited MSW program. The student must provide an official transcript from that program and request transfer credits during the admissions process.

Transfer credits will not be accepted after the first semester in the program. To be transferred, a grade of “B” or better must be received in the course. Courses for transfer must be at least three credits, and they must be taken on a graduate level. All degree requirements must be completed within five years of matriculation. At five years or more prior academic coursework must be repeated. Students should submit the official transcript, official syllabi, learning objectives and readings (if not on the syllabi), an assignment completed for the course, and a narrative describing how the course(s) taken elsewhere are commensurate with the Simmons MSW course(s) to be replaced. Requests will be reviewed by the MSW Program Director or their designee.

Neither certificate programs nor continuing education programs, even when taken in an MSW program, are eligible for transfer.

***Transfer of an Elective Course Taken at Another Institution***

Matriculated students with special interests may be given permission to take one elective course at another institution or in another Simmons University graduate program if:

- It is a Master’s level course at an accredited, degree-granting institution
- The course content shows clear relevance to the social work degree
- The course is not offered at SSW

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- The course earns a minimum of 3 credits and meets for at least the equivalent classroom contact hours as the MSW course

Students must notify their Academic Advisor in writing of such a proposal prior to the registration period. The MSW Director or their designee must review and approve the plan.

If permission is granted, the student is responsible for the transfer of credit to Simmons at the end of the semester. Non-receipt of a transcript and the executed Transfer of Credit Form by the proper deadline in the final year could affect the student's ability to graduate on time. Students must receive a grade of "B" or better to transfer credit.

Matriculated students may not take any required (i.e. core or non-elective) courses outside of the School of Social Work.

### ***Waivers for Students who Receive Advanced Standing in the MSW Program***

Advanced Standing students take advanced year courses and 36 credits are waived for the following foundation courses. By waiving Generalist year courses, students are not required to repeat baccalaureate social work content.

- Social Work Practice (SW 421A & B), 6 credits
- Social Policy and Social Work in Organizations and Communities (SW403) 3 credits
- Human Behavior in the Social Environment (SW 411A), 3 credits
- Racism (SW 409), 3 credits
- Research (SW 441), 3 credits
- Practicum Education (SW446A/SWO446X & SW446B), 9 credits
- Substance Use in Social Work, 3 credits
- 2 Electives, 6 credits

### ***Request for Waiver of Required Generalist Research Course***

To prevent students from repeating content mastered in other research courses, the MSW program offers students an opportunity to waive SW441 Social Work Research. To be approved for a course waiver, a student needs to have taken an identical or very similar graduate course within the past five years and to have earned a grade of "B" or better in that course. If approved for a waiver from SW441, a student must enroll in another 3-credit Simmons MSW elective course in place of SW441 to ensure they meet the credit requirements for graduation. Students must meet the prerequisites for any course they choose to take instead of SW441.

A student intending to seek a waiver from SW441 should submit the waiver form and the following supplemental documents listed below to the MSW Program Director:

1. Course syllabus
2. Course learning objectives
3. Course description
4. Course readings
5. At least one example of work done for the course (exam or written assignment)
6. Narrative linking the previously-taken course to the specific SW441 learning

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objectives. The narrative explains how the previously-taken course's learning objectives are commensurate with the SW441 learning objectives.

7. A student may use more than one course as the basis of their waiver request. If submitting more than one course, the student should submit the first five documents described previously. One narrative describing the courses will suffice.

Requests are due one month prior to the first day of classes for the semester in which the waiver is requested. Students will be informed of the approval or denial of the request for a SW 441 waiver within two weeks of submission. All decisions are final. Incomplete requests will not be reviewed.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **MSW Assessment of Student Learning and the Learning Environment**

The SSW is committed to continuous examination and improvement of student learning outcomes within the framework of the nine CSWE competencies. We have developed a structure for systematically gathering evidence of student learning, and for regularly assessing the implicit curriculum (learning environment). Student learning is assessed by measures and through the Practicum evaluation. Implicit curriculum is assessed by an annual survey. Assessment findings are reported to and analyzed by faculty and administrators and are used to inform curricular revisions, to address changes in the learning environment, and to make changes to our evaluation methods. Built into our assessment plan is a continuous feedback loop that is foundational to our capacity to strengthen student learning. Our stakeholders are included in this feedback loop and include our students, our Practicum agencies, our faculty and our staff. We also post our findings on the SSW website for the larger public.

*The campus and online options use the same assessment plan for the implicit and explicit curriculum.*

### **CSWE Competencies**

The nine CSWE competencies for an MSW are listed below. For detailed descriptions of the competencies, related observable behaviors, and embedded dimensions of practice for the Generalist and Specialized levels, see the Practicum Education Manual.

**Competency 1:** Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

**Competency 2:** Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

**Competency 3:** Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice

**Competency 4:** Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

**Competency 5:** Engage in Policy Practice

**Competency 6:** Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

**Competency 7:** Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

**Competency 8:** Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

**Competency 9:** Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organization and Communities