



# Social Work

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
**COLORADO SPRINGS**

## **Master of Social Work Student Handbook**

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### **Contact Information:**

Primary Contact Information:

[socialwork@uccs.edu](mailto:socialwork@uccs.edu)

719.255.4993

800.990.8227 ext 4993

Mailing Address:

School of Public Affairs

University of Colorado Colorado Springs

1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway

Colorado Springs, CO 80918

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## KEY MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK CONTACTS

To call a UCCS phone number toll free, dial 800.990.8227, then ask the switchboard operator to transfer you to the person's extension number (last 4 digits of phone #).

### Program Director

Catherine A. Simmons  
Professor, School of Public Affairs  
Social Work Chair and  
MSW Program Director  
[csimmon4@uccs.edu](mailto:csimmon4@uccs.edu)  
719.255.4011

### Social Work Faculty and Staff Contacts

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<b>Dr. Mary Fortson-Harwell</b>	<i>Clinical Assistant Professor and MSW Field Director</i>	719.255.4399	<a href="mailto:mfortson@uccs.edu">mfortson@uccs.edu</a>
<b>Stephanie Gangemi</b>	<i>Clinical Assistant Professor and BSW Program Director</i>	719.255.4398	<a href="mailto:sgangemi@uccs.edu">sgangemi@uccs.edu</a>
<b>Dr. Shannon Johnson</b>	<i>Assistant Professor</i>	719.255.XXXX	<a href="mailto:sjohns36@uccs.edu">sjohns36@uccs.edu</a>
<b>Malikah Marrus</b>	<i>Clinical Assistant Professor and BSW Field Director</i>	719.255.XXXX	<a href="mailto:mmarrus@uccs.edu">mmarrus@uccs.edu</a>
<b>Dr. Catherine Simmons</b>	<i>Professor, Social Work Chair and MSW Program Director</i>	719.255.4011	<a href="mailto:csimmon4@uccs.edu">csimmon4@uccs.edu</a>
<b>Dawn Widen</b>	<i>Social Work Academic Services Professional</i>	719.255.4256	<a href="mailto:dwiden@uccs.edu">dwiden@uccs.edu</a>

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### School of Public Affairs Leadership Contacts

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<b>Dr. George Reed</b>	<i>Dean, Professor of Public Administration</i>	719.255.4109	<a href="mailto:george.reed@uccs.edu">george.reed@uccs.edu</a>
<b>Regina Winters</b>	<i>Assistant Dean, Senior Instructor of Public Administration</i>	719.255.4669	<a href="mailto:rwinters@uccs.edu">rwinters@uccs.edu</a>

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[Faculty biographies and research areas of interest](#)

## School of Public Affairs Staff

Elyse Dunckley	<i>Research Administrator</i>	719.255.3315	<a href="mailto:edunckle@uccs.edu">edunckle@uccs.edu</a>
Cindy Joos	<i>Administrative Assistant to the Dean</i>	719.255.4302	<a href="mailto:cjoos@uccs.edu">cjoos@uccs.edu</a>
Mary Lou Kartis	<i>Finance and Operations Manager</i>	719.255.4182	<a href="mailto:mkartis@uccs.edu">mkartis@uccs.edu</a>
Lindsay Knell	<i>Program Assistant</i>	719.255.4131	<a href="mailto:lknell@uccs.edu">lknell@uccs.edu</a>
Mary McGill	<i>HR Professional</i>	719.255.3095	<a href="mailto:mmcgill@uccs.edu">mmcgill@uccs.edu</a>
Steve Recca	<i>Executive Director, Center for Human Security</i>	719.255.4107	<a href="mailto:srecca2@uccs.edu">srecca2@uccs.edu</a>
Pam Sawyer	<i>Director of Strategic Initiatives and Alumni Relations, MSW Internship Coordinator</i>	719.255.3406	<a href="mailto:psawyer@uccs.edu">psawyer@uccs.edu</a>
Caroline Sutton Chubb	<i>Instructional Technologist</i>	719.255.4992	<a href="mailto:cchubb@uccs.edu">cchubb@uccs.edu</a>

## KEY CAMPUS CONTACTS

<a href="#">Bookstore</a>	719.255.3247	<a href="mailto:books@uccs.edu">books@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Bursar (Tuition)</a>	719.255.3391	<a href="mailto:bursar@uccs.edu">bursar@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Campus Closure</a>	719.255.3346	<a href="mailto:eprepare@uccs.edu">eprepare@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Career Center</a>	719.255.3340	<a href="mailto:jobhelp@uccs.edu">jobhelp@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Disability Services</a>	719.255.3354	<a href="mailto:dservice@uccs.edu">dservice@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Excel Communication Center</a>	719.255.4770	<a href="mailto:cec@uccs.edu">cec@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Excel Writing Center</a>	719.255.4336	<a href="mailto:wrtgcntr@uccs.edu">wrtgcntr@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Financial Aid</a>	719.255.3460	<a href="mailto:finaidse@uccs.edu">finaidse@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Graduate School</a>	719.255.3417	<a href="mailto:gradinfo@uccs.edu">gradinfo@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Information Technology (IT)</a>	719.255.3536	<a href="mailto:helpdesk@uccs.edu">helpdesk@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">International Student Services</a>	719.255.7218	<a href="mailto:international@uccs.edu">international@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Kraemer Family Library</a>	719.255.3296	<a href="mailto:circdesk@uccs.edu">circdesk@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Parking</a>	719.255.3528	<a href="mailto:parking@uccs.edu">parking@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Public Safety</a> - general information	719.255.3288	<a href="mailto:police@uccs.edu">police@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Registrar</a> (Records & Registration)	719.255.3361	<a href="mailto:admrec@uccs.edu">admrec@uccs.edu</a>
Safety Escorts	719.255.3111	<a href="mailto:police@uccs.edu">police@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Student Wellness Center</a>	719.255.4444	<a href="mailto:hlthcntr@uccs.edu">hlthcntr@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">University Police</a> - Emergency	3111 from a campus phone or 719.255.3111	<a href="mailto:police@uccs.edu">police@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Veteran &amp; Military Student Affairs</a>	719.255.3253	<a href="mailto:military@uccs.edu">military@uccs.edu</a>

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **Purpose of the MSW Student Handbook**

Welcome to the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) School of Public Affairs! This handbook will acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the MSW program at the School of Public Affairs (SPA). The content is designed to facilitate your progress toward applying for the program and successfully earning the MSW. Please read this handbook carefully and consult your faculty advisor with any questions. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the MSW, SPA, and UCCS Academic Policies. All students are bound by these requirements as stated in the UCCS Academic Catalog and expanded upon in this handbook.

Please be aware that the policies and procedures described here are subject to change and can be affected by changes in the policies of UCCS and the Graduate School. Check the [Academic Catalog](#) and [Social Work](#) website for the most up-to-date information.

## **The School of Public Affairs**

The UCCS MSW program is housed within the School of Public Affairs (SPA), which is a dynamic learning community serving those who seek to make a difference in the public sector. Degrees offered by the School of Public Affairs include the Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work, Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, Master of Criminal Justice, and Master of Public Administration. Our programs emphasize critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for leading and managing effectively in a diverse society. Our graduates are prepared to innovate in the complex world in which we live.

SPA students can also pursue a more limited course of study, earning an undergraduate certificate in Homeland Security or a graduate certificate in Public Management; Nonprofit Management; Criminal Justice; Homeland Security and Emergency Management Leadership; National Security Intelligence; or Grant Writing, Management, and Program Evaluation. Many of these may be earned in conjunction with the degree.

The SPA faculty and staff believes every one of our stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, alumni, the CU system and communities throughout Southern Colorado and beyond) can play a part in transforming our world. Our stakeholders bring their passions, goals, and eagerness to engage. We provide a collaborative environment and an extraordinary combination of rigorous academics, relevant research, practical application, and partnership networks that create the knowledge, skills, experience, and connections needed to create significant impact.

A unique balance of theory and real-world application is delivered not only through curriculum and class interaction, it is also represented by the make-up of carefully chosen faculty and staff as well as through SPA partnerships to stay on the cutting edge of the industries for which it supplies leaders. SPA takes an integrated approach connecting all its programs under the Public Affairs umbrella including public administration and public service, public finance, public and nonprofit management, social and public policy, criminology and criminal justice, ethics and leadership, and homeland security and defense. With the addition of Social Work, we also provide quality graduate and undergraduate social work education.

Together, the SPA disciplines are poised to deliver knowledge, research, and leaders ready and able to create significant impacts that ensure a resilient community and world. Social Work is proud to be included under the SPA umbrella.

### **School of Public Affairs Mission Statement**

The mission of the UCCS School of Public Affairs is to improve the quality of life for people and their communities, here and abroad, through collaborative governance, public service innovation, community engagement, and research.

To accomplish this mission, we strive to

- Improve the quality of public, nonprofit, criminal justice, and national security systems.
- Educate leaders to meet societal challenges with compassion, vision, analytic rigor, and practicality.
- Foster critical thinking and decision-making, effective and confident communication, creative problem-solving, knowledge management, and global citizenship.
- Create, build, and maintain connections with current, past and future students and all the communities we serve.
- Ground our decisions and actions in integrity, diversity, collaboration, and excellence.
- Support and model civil public discourse, citizenship, responsibility, and respect.

### **UCCS Social Work Mission Statement**

Within the context of the UCCS and SPA mission, the mission of the Social Work program at UCCS is to transmit, develop, critically examine, and apply knowledge and practice skills to advance social work practice and social welfare policy in order to promote social, cultural and economic justice for the betterment of poor, vulnerable, and oppressed individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society. The mission of UCCS Social Work is undertaken with a commitment to social work's professional code of ethics and the values of the profession. It directly links to, and extends the focus of, the MSW program mission to meet the needs of students and community stakeholders.

### **Master of Social Work Program Mission Statement**

The UCCS Master of Social Work program prepares advanced professional social workers for ethical and competent trauma-informed social work practice across diverse and different populations at micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

To accomplish this mission, we strive to meet the following goals:

- Educate advanced social work practitioners with knowledge, values, and skills necessary for ethical and competent practice across diverse and different populations with a focus on trauma-informed social work practice (competency 1 & 2)
- Engage students in a process of practice-informed research and research-informed practice (competency 4 & 7)
- Prepare social workers to provide regional leadership in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and services that support human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice and understand the ways trauma impacts all levels of practice (competency 5 & 3)



- Develop social workers who exemplify a commitment to the social work core values while engaging, intervening, and evaluating trauma-informed practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (competency 6, 8 & 9)

## **The MSW Degree**

The MSW degree prepares students for ethical and competent trauma-informed social work practice. Social work is a hands-on profession that strives to help individuals, families, groups, and communities deal with a diverse set of problems. Our curriculum emphasizes trauma-informed social work practice with options to take electives that further prepare you for social work jobs in military, healthcare, child welfare, education, and community settings.

Our experienced faculty members are practitioners and nationally recognized researchers committed to student excellence through a friendly and inviting culture of scholarship.

The UCCS Social Work curriculum is designed to train social workers to help individuals and communities face and solve diverse challenges. Our graduates are prepared for careers as professional social workers able to help individuals, families, groups, and communities enhance, restore and create conditions favorable to social functioning. They fuel success for the regional social service needs of today and tomorrow.

## **Administration**

The MSW Program Director is the key administrative officer for the program and serves as the central contact for questions regarding MSW policies. The MSW Committee provides faculty governance and guides the program. It is comprised of the MSW Program Director and MSW faculty and the Social Work staff. Additional input on the MSW program is provided by the MSW Advisory Board.

The Social Work Student Support Specialist provides information on applying to the program, registration and related issues, and serves as an advisor for students concerning basic degree planning. Students are assigned a faculty advisor upon acceptance into the program for professional and academic guidance throughout the program. The faculty advisor can provide valuable guidance on career planning, educational progression, and individual course options.

## **Accreditation**

The UCCS MSW program is currently in Pre-Candidacy for Accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation.

Pre-Candidacy for a baccalaureate or master's social work program by the Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation indicates that it has submitted an application to be reviewed for Candidacy. A program that has attained Pre-Candidacy has not yet been reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation or been verified to be in compliance with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. The Council on Social Work Education does not publicly disclose whether programs have currently attained Pre-Candidacy Status until they are granted Candidacy.

Students who enter the program while it is still in Pre-Candidacy will not be recognized as attending a program in Candidacy unless the program attains Candidacy in the academic year in which those students

enter. The Candidacy Process is typically a three-year process and there is no guarantee that a program in Pre-Candidacy will eventually attain Candidacy or Initial Accreditation. Students who enter programs that attain Candidacy in or before the academic year in which they begin their program of study will be retroactively recognized as having graduated from a CSWE-accredited program once the program attains Initial Accreditation. Candidacy by the Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation applies to all program sites and program delivery methods of an accredited program. Accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of the program and the competence of students graduating from the program.

For more information about social work accreditation, you may contact [Accreditation](#).

## **Competency-Based Education**

Social Work education relies on competency-based education. "Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being" (CSWE, 2015, p. 6). To this end, MSW students work to attain the following 9 competencies, which are required by CSWE for all social work programs:

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

## 2. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

### **Admission Calendar**

The MSW program follows a modified cohort model. As such, traditional MSW applicants (e.g., full-time and extended degree plan) are admitted in the fall semester only. Advanced standing applicants are admitted in the summer only.

Admission consideration for to the traditional MSW program (e.g., full-time and extended degree plan) is conducted 3 times a year according to the dates posted on the internet. Generally, early applications are reviewed in December, Financial Aid priority applications are reviewed in February, and the final priority applications are reviewed in April.

Admission consideration for to the Advanced Standing program is also conducted 3 times a year according to the dates posted on the internet. Generally, early applications are reviewed in December, Financial Aid priority applications are reviewed in February, and the final priority applications are reviewed in March.

If space remains after the final deadline for all MSW degree pathways, applications will remain open until the cohort is full or until 30 days prior to the first day of classes, whichever comes first.

Students applying for financial aid, which include scholarships, should apply to the program no later than the Financial Aid priority deadline.

### **Full-Time and Extended Study MSW Program Prerequisites**

Detailed requirements for applying to the School of Public Affairs may be found on SPA's website in the [Future Students](#) section. All applicants must [apply online](#).

The prerequisites for admission to the UCCS MSW program for full time and extended study applicants include a four-year undergraduate degree from an institution accredited by a recognized regional accrediting association (or the equivalent thereof as determined by the UCCS International Admissions if degree was earned outside of the U.S.) with grades sufficiently high to indicate ability to pursue graduate work (typically a grade point average of 3.0 or better).

Successful MSW applicants may have majored in any field for the undergraduate degree. However, sufficient undergraduate preparation and training for graduate study in social welfare is required. We operationalize this as significant academic preparation in the social sciences roughly defined as at least 18 social science credits (anthropology, economics, ethnic studies, ethics, geography, history, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology, etc.; in any combination).

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is not required for admission to the MSW program.

### **Advanced Standing MSW Program Prerequisites**

Applicants with a Baccalaureate social work degree earned within the last 10 years from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher are encouraged to apply for the advanced standing program.

The prerequisites for admission to the advanced standing UCCS MSW program include a Baccalaureate social work degree from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education earned within 10 years of MSW program Admission and an undergraduate cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher. The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is not required for admission to the advanced standing MSW program.

Those applying to the MSW program more than 10 years since earning the baccalaureate social work degree are required to complete the 60-credit program as a full-time or extended study student. The reason for this is that the knowledge has improved and the CSWE accreditation standards have changed at least twice since the degree was earned. As such, we believe completing the generalist practice curriculum will not cause these students to repeat what was achieved in their baccalaureate social work program(s).

## Required Application Materials for All Applicants

In general, applicants must submit the following:

- Online Graduate School Application
- \$60 non-refundable application fee (\$100 for international students)
- Official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended
- Contact information for 2 professional references (It is recommended that applicants select a cross-section of references, including employers, faculty or other individuals who have evaluated the applicant's work and can speak to the student's academic abilities and/or related paid work or volunteer experience)
- NOTE: Students applying to the advanced standing program must submit a copy of a field placement evaluation(s). If the applicant has not completed a placement but is currently enrolled in field, an evaluation from the field instructor or liaison must be included with the application.
- Current resume detailing education, volunteer and employment experiences, including beginning and ending month and year as well as the average hours worked or volunteered per week. Work or volunteer experience cannot be considered without this information.
- Professional statements (500 to 1,000 words for each question) are also required. The professional statement should address each of the following:
  - **Prompt 1.** Describe a social problem that relates to social justice. (Indicate potential solutions to the problem, indicate potential challenges that could surface, and incorporate social work ethical values and principles that will guide your approach to addressing this problem).
  - **Prompt 2.** Describe a challenge that you faced and the steps you took to address, resolve, and/or overcome it (create a clear picture of the challenge including nature and origin of the challenge, discuss the role you played in the challenge including the actual, implied, and/or potential impact on you and others, explain the steps you took to address, resolve, and/or overcome the challenge, and address the impact the steps taken to address, resolve, and/or overcome challenge had on the way you address professional challenges).
  - **Prompt 3.** Describe your goals in the social work profession (indicate the academic, professional and life experiences that prepared you for this program. Indicate your preparedness as it pertains to working with socially and economically disadvantaged

populations and specify the resources and supports available to you to successfully complete the MSW degree program and manage challenges that may include the academic rigor of the program as well as the stress that is common to working with intense life experiences of people and communities served by social workers).

## **English as a Second Language and International Applicants**

English as a second language (ESL) students may apply after obtaining a minimum score of 85 on the TOEFL or 6.5 on the IELTS exams. If the applicant's scores do not meet these minimums, she/he/they will be asked to provide writing samples and to complete an interview in order for the School to more accurately assess applied (rather than tested) English language abilities.

International students have different general application requirements. Please see the [International Admissions website](#) for additional information.

## **Admissions Decisions**

Admission to the UCCS MSW program is competitive. Demand for the UCCS MSW program often exceeds capacity. UCCS MSW Admissions Committee decisions are final.

Applicants who are denied admission may not apply again during the same admission cycle but are welcome to apply in subsequent admission cycles.

## **Admissions Decisions for Financial Aid**

Students seeking financial aid must await formal approval for admission by the University. This process may take slightly longer than the SPA admissions process.

## **Admission Status**

When an applicant meets all admission qualifications, he/she/they are normally admitted with regular graduate status.

In cases where a student shows potential, but does not meet the minimum qualifications for admission, he/she/they MAY be admitted on provisional status. Such cases only occur when elements of his/her/their application suggest they may be able to perform successfully in the program.

Those admitted on provisional status must earn a B- or better in SWRK 5001 and 5006 within the first 12 months of enrolling in the MSW program and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Upon completion of this criteria, the student is removed from provisional status. Failure to fulfill the provisional criteria will result in dismissal from the program.

Provisional admission is not available for advanced standing applicants. Applicants who are not accepted for the advanced standing option will be considered for the full-time regular standing on-campus option unless the applicant specifies otherwise.

## **Taking Classes as a Non-degree Seeking Student**

Students who want to take elective courses rather than pursue an MSW degree should apply as a non-degree seeking student. Non-degree seeking students include those who are interested in exploring the courses and those who have a degree program application in process. Non-degree seeking students may apply to the MSW program in the future. If a non-degree seeking student applies and is admitted to the MSW program, no more than twelve credit hours of coursework taken as a non-degree seeking student may be applied to the MSW degree.

Non-degree seeking students must complete an [Application for Admission](#) to the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, selecting the certificate(s) they wish to pursue, submit official transcripts showing a bachelor's degree has been conferred, and submit a \$50 non-refundable application fee.

Taking courses as a non-degree seeking student contains some element of risk because admission to the program is not a certainty. Not all courses are available for non-degree seeking students and prior approval from both the course instructor and the MSW Program Director are required prior to enrollment. Non-degree seeking students are also not permitted to take any 6000 courses. Therefore, students who would like to become MSW degree seeking students are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. The non-degree status is most useful when a student wants to pursue electives only.

## **Readmission of Inactive, Withdrawn, and Suspended Students**

Students who have been admitted to SPA must complete their coursework and degree requirements within six years of registration in their first course. Exceptions must be approved in writing by the Dean of the School of Public Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Occasionally, students find it necessary to interrupt their coursework for one or more semesters. An extended interruption, however, may result in the student being placed on inactive or withdrawn status. Students who do not enroll in any classes during the semester for which they were admitted, and students who have not registered for classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer), are placed on inactive or discontinued status. In order to register for courses again, a discontinued student must reapply to the University and resubmit a tuition classification form to Admissions. Students needing a leave of absence of one year or more are required to fill out a Leave of Absence form (available from the graduate recruitment and retention specialist). If more than one year has passed since the student's original application, and a Leave of Absence form is not on file, a new full application form must be submitted. The student will also need to obtain approval from SPA for re-entry into the program. Contact the graduate recruitment and retention specialist at 719.255.4993 for more information.

A dismissed student is eligible to reapply for admission no sooner than one year after dismissal. Approval or rejection of this application rests with the MSW Program Director.

## **Academic and Professional Advising**

Upon admission to the MSW program, students are assigned a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor is responsible to help the student successfully navigate the program. Newly admitted students should meet initially with the graduate recruitment and retention specialist to discuss registration, program requirements, and preliminary degree planning.

Students may request that they be assigned a faculty advisor with particular expertise in a field in which they are interested, so that the faculty advisor may provide advice on appropriate electives and career planning. The academic advisor will be a member of the MSW faculty. The major responsibilities of the academic advisor are to:

- Assist students in assessing their aptitude and suitability for a career in social work practice.
- Provide students with specific information about courses and program requirements.
- Advise on course planning in relation to the program's course requirements and the student's educational needs.
- Consult with students as they prepare for field placement.
- Assist students in evaluating their progress and performance in the program.
- Advise students who experience class and field performance difficulties or other issues related to their professional education.
- Serve as a mentor to students as they enter the profession of social work.

Students are informed about advising through a variety of means: (1) the advising policies and procedures are spelled out in the MSW student handbook; (2) the advising policies and procedures are discussed during orientation; and (3) students are welcome to see their advisor anytime they have questions about the policies and procedures for advising.

### 3. MSW PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

#### **Full-time and Extended Degree Requirements**

To earn an MSW degree, a student must:

- Complete a minimum of 60 semester hours of graduate coursework with a total grade-point average of B (3.0) or better;
- Complete 900 hours of field placement, of which 400 hours are to be completed in the generalist year at the 5000 level and 500 are to be completed the specialization year at the 6000 level)
- Receive a grade of B- (2.7) or better in all courses

#### **Advanced Standing Degree Requirements**

To earn an MSW degree, a student must:

- Complete a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate coursework with a total grade-point average of B (3.0) or better;
- Complete 500 hours of field placement at the 6000 level
- Receive a grade of B- (2.7) or better in all courses

#### **Time Requirements for MSW Degree**

The time to completion depends on the number of courses a student successfully completes each semester. Students in the full-time MSW program should expect to complete the degree in no less than 2 years. Students in the extended MSW program should expect to complete the degree in no less than 3 or 4 years. Students in the advanced standing MSW program should expect to complete the degree in no less than 1 year.

Students must complete their degree no later than six years after the starting date of their first MSW class, even when that course is taken as a non-degree seeking student.

#### **Acceptable Grades**

Students must receive a grade of B- or better in all courses applied toward the degree. In order to remain in good academic standing and to receive his/her degree, a student is required to maintain at least a B (3.0) grade point average, which includes all work required for the MSW degree while taken at UCCS (classified and unclassified) and may differ from the University grade point average.

A student who receives a grade below B- in a course may repeat that course once, with the approval of the MSW Program Director, provided the course has not been previously applied toward a degree. The grade received in a repeated course may substitute for the original grade and only the latter grade will be used in calculating the student's MSW grade point average required for graduation. However, all grades received during the student's graduate school experience will appear on the student's transcript and will be used in calculating the student's UCCS grade point average.



## Required Courses

All MSW students must complete the following required courses:

<b>Generalist Practice Coursework</b>		<b>Credits</b>
SWRK 5001	Skills for Social Work Practice	3
SWRK 5002	Individual Social Work	3
SWRK 5006	Human Behavior and the Social Environment	3
SWRK 5390	Rethinking Social Policy	3
SWRK 5004	Organization and Community Social Work	3
SWRK 5005	Small Group Interventions	3
SWRK 5003	Research and Analytic Methods	3
SWRK 5111	Generalist Field Placement I	3
SWRK 5112	Generalist Field Placement II	3
<b>Specialized Practice Coursework</b>		
SWRK 6001	Psychopathology and Trauma	3
SWRK 6002	Trauma and Violence for Social Work Practice	3
SWRK 6003	Trauma Informed Social Work Practice	3
SWRK 6004	Evaluative Research	3
SWRK 6111	Specialized Field Placement I	3
SWRK 6112	Specialized Field Placement II	3
SWRK 6113	Trauma Informed Seminar	3
<b>Electives</b>		
	Elective	3
	Elective	3
	Elective	3
	Elective	3
<b>Total Credits Required</b>		<b>60</b>

Course descriptions may be found in the [Academic Catalog](#).

## Field Placement Requirements

As defined by the Council on Social Work Education: *In social work, the signature pedagogy is field education. The intent of field education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and field—are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies.*

Field Practicum provides an opportunity for the student to apply the general knowledge of theories and principles presented in the classroom to problems and challenges in the field. The field experience allows the student to try on and develop the role of professional social worker. The field instructor serves as a mentor, role model, and a source of feedback to the student regarding the student's performance and professional growth. Therefore, the purpose of field practicum is summed up in three words: integration, application, and socialization. The student integrates what has been learned, applies that knowledge in

specific practice situations, and in the process, develops an identity as an emerging, professional social worker.

Field practicum gives students the opportunity to connect theory with practice (integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge), experience situations that focus attention on the use of social work values/ethics and encourage identification with the purposes and functions of the profession. Additionally, students have the opportunity to acquire expertise in assessment and intervention at all levels of client systems from the individual (micro practice), family and group (mezzo practice), to the organizational and community (macro practice).

**Generalist Practice Field:** During the generalist practice year, MSW field practicum (SWRK 5011 and 5012), students have the opportunity to observe the field instructor and other appropriate professionals as approved by the field instructor, and to practice alongside these professionals as they build initial skills and incorporate theoretical perspectives and research informed intervention techniques from classroom learning. Students must complete no less than 400 Generalist Practice Field hours.

**Specialized Practice Field:** During the specialization year, MSW field practicum (SWRK 5011, 5012 and 5013), students are expected to take on increasing levels of autonomous practice, especially as the practicum progresses. Students will continue to be supervised by the field instructor as the student moves in the direction of “doing” more than “observing” as would have been the case during foundation field. Skills at the specialization level are expected to incorporate more complexity in terms of a) trauma informed social work practice, b) systems addressed and their problems; c) theoretical perspective and interventions employed; and d) problem-solving skills and independent critical thinking of the student, all under the watchful eye of the field instructor as supervisor. Students must complete no less than 500 Specialized Practice Field hours.

**Social Work Field Placement Manual:** The Social Work Field Placement Manual is available on the UCCS Social Work Website and through the MSW Field Director. Please refer to it for specifics related to field placement policies and procedures.

## Electives

In addition to completing the required courses, students must complete four elective courses (12-credit hours). The MSW program and SPA both offer a wide variety of electives. Some are offered on a routine basis; others may be a one-time offering.

Students may choose to focus electives, so as to earn one or more graduate certificates concurrently with the MSW degree. Available graduate certificates MSW students may consider include: Nonprofit Management; Criminal Justice; and Grant Writing, Management, and Program Evaluation.

## Transfer Credits

Students who transfer credits from another program within UCCS or from another institution may transfer up to 12-credit hours of master level work (e.g., 20% of the total MSW credits) into the full time and extended study MSW program, with prior approval from the MSW Director. Students with an earned doctorate seeking to earn the MSW may transfer up to 18-credit hours of master or doctoral level work (e.g., 30% of the total MSW credits). Transfer credits are not permissible for students enrolled in the advanced standing program.

All transfer work must be at the B grade level or above from a regionally accredited college or university and taken within 6 years of the student's date of graduation. Credits applied to another master's degree may not be considered for transfer. Credits taken as an undergraduate student may not be considered for transfer, regardless of the level the course was taken.

Not all courses offered in the CU System, nor other colleges and universities, are transferrable to the UCCS MSW program. Transfer work must be relevant to the social work profession. Only courses from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and taught by an MSW trained instructor with at least 2 years of practice experience may be considered for the core curriculum. Field courses and trauma informed seminar are not transferable. Therefore, pre-approval from the MSW Program Director is required for all courses taken outside the UCCS MSW program.

Transfer requests must be submitted to the MSW Program Director and the Student Support Specialist via e-mail. When making the request please include the following information:

- The course or courses which you would like transferred
- Copies of the syllabi for each course being considered in the transfer request
- A brief narrative describing the course and identifying the course which you believe it should replace (e.g., specific course name and number or elective). Please note, this is only a suggestion. The MSW Program Director makes the final determination about both whether a course will transfer and what MSW requirement it will replace.
- Please remember this request will become part of your official UCCS record. As such, make sure your request is professionally written and formatted.

## Typical Course Load

Students pursuing the full-time MSW course sequence enroll in fifteen (five classes) credit hours each fall and spring semester. Students pursuing the extended MSW course sequence enroll in six (two classes) to nine (three classes) credit hours each fall, spring and summer semester. Students pursuing the Advanced Standing MSW course sequence enroll in six (two classes) in the summer then between nine (three classes) and fifteen (five classes) credit hours each fall and spring or fall, spring and summer semester.

At UCCS, graduate students are considered to be full-time when taking five or more credit hours during fall or spring semesters or three or more credit hours during summer semester.

## Independent Study

Students who are interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings, may elect to take SWRK 9500: Independent Study with a member of the faculty. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member who has expertise in the area. Students must submit the Petition for Independent Study form, found under MSW Program Resources at:

- <http://www.uccs.edu/spa/programs/graduate/MSW.html>

With faculty assistance, students then develop a course of study that meets the requirements of the University and SPA, as well as student needs. No more than six hours of independent study credit may apply toward MSW degree requirements.

## Portfolio as the Culminating Experience

All MSW students are required to complete SWRK 6013: Trauma Informed Seminar. The Trauma Informed Seminar is typically taken during the last semester of the student's degree program and is a corequisite with SWRK 6012 Specialization Field Placement II. Trauma Informed Seminar cannot be taken during the summer semester or transferred in from another school or university.

Trauma Informed Seminar builds on competencies gained in the generalist and specialized field placements by providing a forum for integration and consolidation. The course also links classroom content to real-work application by covering preparation for advanced social work practice, job search skills, and preparation for the social work licensure exam. Successful completion of a comprehensive portfolio serves as the UCCS Graduate School culminating experience requirement and is also used as the primary program assessment tool for the MSW program. As such, all students must receive a passing score on the portfolio.

## Thesis Option

The thesis option is available for MSW students who are interested in pursuing a topic in-depth or who are planning to pursue a career in research or academe. The Master's Thesis course (SWRK 6950) presents students with the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in coursework to a question of interest drawn from their current or future careers in public or nonprofit organizations. The thesis requires six semester hours of credit that normally spans two semesters. To oversee their work, students must select a thesis advisor from the Social Work faculty and have this approved by the MSW Program Director.

The thesis takes the place of 6 elective credits. Students choosing to pursue a Thesis must also complete the Integrated Field Seminar, including earning an 80% or higher on the practice social work license exam.

Thesis students typically conduct a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collect original data or analyze existing data in new ways.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include:

- Matriculation in the MSW program
- Successful completion of all generalist practice courses
- Overall GPA of 3.75 or higher
- Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest
- Agreement of two faculty members to serve on the thesis committee (one as Thesis Advisor)

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through her/his/their faculty academic advisor, first, to establish eligibility with respect to the above criteria, and second, to identify appropriate faculty members to serve on the student's thesis committee. The thesis committee consists of three people: a major advisor who is a Social Work faculty member, and two others. One of these must be a Social Work faculty member, though the person can be a part-time instructor (e.g., an adjunct faculty member). The other is a reader who has expertise in the area and can be from UCCS Social Work, another school or department, or from the community. (NOTE: Although the formal procedures entail application through the academic advisor, the student is encouraged to make informal contacts with appropriate subject-matter faculty to determine interest and availability.)

## **The UCCS MSW Program Does Not Grant Credit for Life Experience**

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

## 4. COURSE SEQUENCE OPTIONS

### MSW Course Sequencing, Full-Time, Extended, and Advanced Standing

The traditional UCCS MSW program can be completed in 2, 3, or 4 years, depending on how many courses a student takes each semester.

Students enrolled in the MSW program may choose to complete the program in 2 years as full-time students or in 3 to 4 years as extended study students.

### MSW Course Sequence Option: Full-Time 2-Year Option

Year 1 Generalist Practice					
FALL			SPRING		
SWRK 5001	Skills for Social Work Practice	3	SWRK 5004	Organization & Community Social Work	3
SWRK 5002	Individual Social Work	3	SWRK 5005	Small Group Interventions	3
SWRK 5006	Human Behavior & the Social Environment	3	SWRK 5003	Research & Analytic Methods	3
SWRK 5390	Rethinking Social Policy	3	Elective	Elective	3
SWRK 5111	Generalist Field Placement I	3	SWRK 5112	Generalist Field Placement II	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>		<b>15</b>

Year 2 Specialized Practice					
FALL			SPRING		
SWRK 6001	Psychopathology & Trauma	3	SWRK 6003	Treatment of Trauma	3
SWRK 6002	Trauma & Violence	3	SWRK 6004	Evaluative Research	3
Elective	Elective	3	Elective	Elective	3
Elective	Elective	3	SWRK 6113	* Trauma Informed Seminar	3
SWRK 6111	Specialized Field Placement I	3	SWRK 6112	*Specialized Field Placement II	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>		<b>15</b>

\* To ensure the culminating experience reflects the entire curriculum, Specialized Field Placement II and the Trauma Informed Seminar must be taken in the final semester of the program.

## MSW Course Sequence Option: Extended Study 3- or 4-year option

### Year 1 Generalist Practice

FALL			SPRING		
SWRK 5001	Skills for Social Work Practice	3	SWRK 5004	Organization & Community Social Work	3
SWRK 5006	Human Behavior and the Social Environment	3	SWRK 5003	Research and Analytic Methods	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours 6</b>			<b>Total Student Credit Hours 6</b>		
SUMMER					
SWRK 5002	Individual Social Work	3	SWRK 5005	Small Group Interventions	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours 6</b>					

**Option A:** Students may take Individual Social Work (SWRK 5002) and Small Group Interventions (SWRK 5005) in the summer between year 1 and 2. If time permits, they may also take an elective in the summer.

**Option B:** Students who are unable to take summer courses may take Individual Social Work (SWRK 5002) in the fall of year 1 or year 2 and Small Group Interventions (SWRK 5005) in the spring of year 1 or year 2.

### Year 2 Generalist Practice

FALL			SPRING		
SWRK 5390	Rethinking Social Policy	3		Elective	3
SWRK 5111	Field Placement I	3	SWRK 5112	Field Placement II	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours 6</b>			<b>Total Student Credit Hours 6</b>		

### Years 3 & 4 Specialized Practice Can be condensed into a 3-year program

SUMMER					
	Elective	3		Elective	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours 6</b>					
FALL			SPRING		
SWRK 6001	Psychopathology & Trauma	3	SWRK 6003	Treatment of Trauma	3
SWRK 6002	Trauma & Violence	3	SWRK 6004	Evaluative Research	3
	Elective	3	SWRK 6113	* Trauma Informed Seminar	?
SWRK 6111	Specialized Field Placement I	3	SWRK 6112	* Specialized Field Placement II	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours 15</b>			<b>Total Student Credit Hours 15</b>		

\* To ensure the culminating experience reflects the entire curriculum, Specialized Field Placement II and the Trauma Informed Seminar must be taken in the final semester of the program.

## Advanced Standing Course Sequence

Advanced standing students follow a different course sequence, which requires a summer start date. The program may be completed in 1 or more years depending on the needs of the student.

### Summer Start is Required for All Advanced Standing Students

SUMMER					
SWRK 5201	Research and Policy Review for Advanced Standing	3	SWRK 5202	Advanced Standing Seminar	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>					<b>15</b>

Specialized Practice					
FALL			SPRING		
SWRK 6001	Psychopathology & Trauma	3	SWRK 6003	Treatment of Trauma	3
SWRK 6002	Trauma & Violence	3	SWRK 6004	Evaluative Research	3
Elective	Elective	3	Elective	Elective	3
Elective	Elective	3	SWRK 6113	* Trauma Informed Seminar	3
SWRK 6111	Specialized Field Placement I	3	SWRK 6112	*Specialized Field Placement II	3
<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>			<b>Total Student Credit Hours</b>		
<b>15</b>			<b>15</b>		

\* To ensure the culminating experience reflects the entire curriculum, Specialized Field Placement II and the Trauma Informed Seminar must be taken in the final semester of the program.



## 5. Course Descriptions

### Generalist Practice Courses

The generalist practice courses target content common across all social work education programs.

Required generalist coursework includes the following list of courses.

**Skills for Social Work Practice (SWRK 5001):** Presents introduction concepts including social work history, values, ethics, micro practice, and macro practice. Designed to socialize students into the social work profession, prepare students to enter the field experience, and promote the development of professional values, ethics, behaviors, and competence. Provides a concrete opportunity for students to integrate, synthesize, and apply classroom learning in the practice environment.

**Individual Social Work (SWRK 5002):** Presents generalist foundation theories of practice essential to social work practice with individuals while considering the person-in-environment contexts in which social workers practice. The primary emphasis of the course is on assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and evaluation. The theories used in this course provide different models for understanding human behavior, as well as how to create and evaluate planned change. Content on multiculturalism, diversity, social justice, and social change issues are integrated into all aspects of the course. Students examine social work values and ethics as well as issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability as these relate to interpersonal practice with individuals.

**Research and Analytic Methods (SWRK 5003):** This course examines the research methods used to answer questions and test hypotheses in public and non-profit settings. Methods covered include identifying and reviewing scholarly literature; formulating research questions; selecting the appropriate design, data collection, and sampling strategies; and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data.

**Organization and Community Social Work (SWRK 5004):** Presents the history and development of community and administrative practice in social work. Surveys theory and builds skills in many roles associated with community and administrative practice. Emphasis is placed on the structure and culture of communities, engaging with a community organization to build relationships, designing programs in response to community needs, and evaluating the effectiveness of programs. In addition, issues of diverse dimensions [e.g., ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation] will be emphasized throughout, with special focus on culturally sensitive practice (i.e., multicultural community organizing, culturally sensitive management practices, culturally sensitive analyses of policy proposals and their impact, and culturally sensitive research practices).

**Small Group Systems (SWRK 5005):** A generalist practice overview on methods to restore, maintain, and promote social functioning as it relates to families and small groups. Basic practice skills will be introduced, including communication skills and techniques, relationship skills, and use of self. Students will learn how to assess and address family and small group problems, and to employ a variety of strategies and techniques such as programs, structured activities, exercises, etc. The course will also consider how gender, ethnicity, race, social class, sexual orientation, and different abilities impact various aspects of family and group functioning and the selection of intervention strategies.

**Human Behavior and the Social Environment (SWRK 5006):** Provides students with critical perspectives on a variety of theoretical frameworks used to understand regularities and irregularities in human development and functioning across the life span. One important focus is the ecological-developmental approach, which emphasizes the ways in which culture and the broader social environment shape human behavior and identity, both in terms of general patterns and unique configurations. Particular attention is paid to culture, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation as dynamic social constructions that can be sources of both oppression and strength at all levels of social systems. A second focus is on the biological, psychological, and spiritual person and the interrelatedness of emotion and cognition, neurobiology, and the social environment. Emphasizes the changing, dynamic, and interactive processes that shape human behavior and development of self across the life span.

**Rethinking Social Policy (SWRK 5390):** Provides an overview of United States social welfare policies and programs beginning with the New Deal and progressing to study of major social welfare issues, the political and social contexts in which social policies and programs are developed and implemented, and the conflicts and reform efforts that arise.

**Generalist Field Placement I (SWRK 5111):** First course of the two-course generalist field placement sequence. The course requires completion of a minimum of 200 field hours at an approved social service agency and classroom-based field integration sessions. Students are provided the context to put their social work knowledge, values, and skills to use in professional practice. Prepares students for work as generalist social workers, helps them learn to apply critical thinking skills, and increases their range of social work skills and techniques. The course also helps develop a self-awareness about one's cognitive and affective processes in relation to professional practice and an understanding about the social work profession, perspective, and values.

**Generalist Field Placement II (SWRK 5112):** Second course of the two-course generalist field placement sequence. The course requires completion of a minimum of 200 field hours at an approved social service agency and classroom-based field integration sessions. Students are provided the context to put their social work knowledge, values, and skills to use in professional practice. Prepares students for work as generalist social workers, helps them learn to apply critical thinking skills, and increases their range of social work skills and techniques. The course also helps develop a self-awareness about one's cognitive and affective processes in relation to professional practice and an understanding about the social work profession, perspective, and values.

## **Specialized Practice Courses**

The specialized practice curriculum provides a strong pedagogical foundation for trauma-informed social work practice. The trauma-informed practice sequence is designed to equip social workers with the skills they need to provide trauma-informed care across a wide range of target populations. Required specialized practice coursework includes the following list of courses.

**Psychopathology and Trauma (SWRK 6001):** The course uses a trauma-informed lens to view mental health conditions including diagnostic issues and the impact specific diagnoses have on behavior. Psychopathology and mental disorders from a trauma-informed and ecological perspective are examined. Emphasis is placed on understanding biopsychosocial influences on the incidence, course, and treatment of the most commonly presented mental health related disorders and the impact of trauma on etiology and presentation across diverse populations. Students learn diagnostic skills as they relate to

comprehensive social work assessment and the development of social work interventions. Ethical issues, collaboration with families, knowledge of psychopharmacology, and the varied roles social workers play in mental health settings are stressed.

**Trauma and Violence (SWRK 6002):** Emphasizes trauma-informed practice with client systems and across a range of diverse populations using the world health organization (WHO) categories of violence (self-directed, interpersonal, and collective). Consideration is given to of violence that occurs within the family (e.g., intimate partner violence, child maltreatment/ neglect/ abuse, and elder abuse), the community (e.g., violent crime, gang violence, homicide), and society as a whole (e.g., social, economic, and political violence). Trauma-informed approaches to working with both offenders and victims/survivors across diverse populations are addressed. Special attention is given to the needs of families affected by poverty, persons with emotional and developmental disabilities, and the role of policy on direct practice. Core practice frameworks may encompass safety planning, crisis intervention, collaborative service delivery, and strengths-based intervention models.

**Treatment of Trauma (SWRK 6003):** Examines roles, assessments, and intervention strategies for social workers working with clients exposed to specific types of trauma (e.g., rape, war, natural disasters). Emphasis is placed on understanding biopsychosocial influences, psychopharmacology, incidence, course, treatment and evidence-based assessment and interventions skills. Presents an advanced theoretic approach to social work interventions with clients and client systems impacted by trauma across multiple populations in which social workers practice.

**Evaluative Research (SWRK 6004):** Using a trauma informed lens, the course is an advanced exploration of the techniques, methods, and issues relevant to ethical practice in evaluative research. Topics covered include history, philosophies, and conceptual approaches in evaluative research; using evaluative research to improve decisions making; ethics and power; evaluation for policy change; analysis of the strengths/limitations of practice and program evaluation methods; the analysis and management of data; and the measurement of practice and program goals/objectives through process and outcome evaluations. With an emphasis on critical thinking, evidence-based practice, and trauma-informed approaches, students will utilize these skills to develop evaluations for social work practice.

**Trauma Informed Seminar (SWRK 6113):** Builds on competencies gained throughout the MSW curriculum by providing a forum to solidify academic content with real world social work practice experiences. An emphasis is placed on integrating field experiences and course content. The course moves through micro, mezzo and macro levels of trauma informed social work practice across a range of social work settings. Content covers preparation for advanced trauma-informed social work practice, job search skills, and preparation for the social work licensure exam. The course is taken concurrently with the Specialized Field Placement II (SWRK 6112) in the final semester of the MSW program.

**Specialized Field Placement I (SWRK 6111):** First course of the two-course specialized field placement sequence. The course requires completion of a minimum of 250 field hours at an approved social service agency and classroom-based field integration sessions. Students are provided the context to put their social work knowledge, values, and skills to use in an advanced social work practice setting. The experience prepares students for work as trauma informed social workers, helps them learn to apply critical thinking skills, and increases their range of social work skills and techniques. The specialized field practice experience provides opportunities for complex application of social work theories, models, values, and ethics in trauma informed social work practice.

**Specialized Field Placement II (SWRK 6112):** Second course of the two-course specialized field placement sequence. The course requires completion of a minimum of 250 field hours at an approved social service agency and classroom-based field integration sessions. Students are provided the context to put their social work knowledge, values, and skills to use in an advanced social work practice setting. The experience prepares students for work as trauma informed social workers, helps them learn to apply critical thinking skills, and increases their range of social work skills and techniques. The specialized field practice experience provides opportunities for complex application of social work theories, models, values, and ethics in trauma informed social work practice. The course is taken concurrently with the Trauma Informed Seminar (SWRK 6113) in the final semester of the MSW program.

## 6. STUDENT SUPPORT

### Advising

Advising for MSW students is a primary responsibility of faculty, with support from the graduate recruitment and retention specialist. In general, questions about program logistics are best addressed by the graduate recruitment and retention specialist. Faculty advisors are experts in their fields and can advise students on appropriate electives, professional networking within the field, capstone/thesis planning, and career planning. International students are additionally supported by the [Global Engagement Office](#), which assists with other issues such as visa requirements.

### Student Success

UCCS, SPA, and the Social Work Programs value student success. Resources exist at both School and campus levels to assist students in many areas. Social Work faculty and staff are available to help match resources to needs. Social Work students who believe they need academic support are encouraged to reach out to their instructors and/or faculty advisor. All SPA students are invited and encouraged to attend professional development opportunities provided by the School of Public Affairs.

Many campus-level student resources exist. SPA works regularly with many of these resources, including:

- [The Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs](#)
- [Global Engagement Office](#)
- [Academic Centers for Excellence, including the Writing and Communications Centers](#)
- [Disability Services](#)
- [Multicultural Office for Student Access, Inclusiveness and Community \(MOSAIC\)](#)
- [Mental Health Services](#) in the Recreation and Wellness Center

Effective communication – written and verbal – is an important component of the MSW program. Fostering effective communication is part of our mission. The [Excel Writing Center](#) is a valuable partner in assisting students of all skill levels to become aware of personal idiosyncrasies and to improve writing ability. The [Excel Communication Center](#) offers presentation practice and feedback, tutoring for creating presentations, and facilitation for small groups. Students for whom English is a second language have additional communication resources available through the Global Engagement Office, and UCCS has an excellent English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Finally, MSW students typically work closely with the [SPA liaison in the Kraemer Family Library](#), who offers invaluable online or in person information sessions, tailored to individual research or other associated needs.

### Career Resources

The School maintains employment opportunities on its website, and all students are welcome to contact the [UCCS Career Center](#) with questions about careers and future employment. Students are also encouraged to connect with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) for ongoing notifications of potential interest.

## 7. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is available to support those students who would not be able to pursue the MSW without aid. The primary source of information about need-based student financial assistance as well as scholarships and other non-need-based aid is the UCCS Office of Financial Aid, Student Employment and Scholarships. Additional information on financial assistance programs may be obtained through the Graduate School.

Qualified students may receive assistance with various types of VA benefits through the Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs.

The School of Public Affairs offers scholarships and a limited number of graduate teaching or research assistantships to students. Scholarship opportunities specific to MSW students are announced to all School of Public Affairs students. Graduate assistantships, when available, are advertised through the Office of Financial Aid, Student Employment and Scholarships.

## 8. MSW GRADUATION PROCEDURES

All students graduating from the MSW program must apply for graduation by completing the steps outlined on the Graduate School website. Do not procrastinate, as deadlines are early in the semester. Students who have completed all the requirements for the MSW degree can apply for candidacy and graduation in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. Students who complete their degree requirements in the summer may participate in graduation ceremonies in the fall. No graduation ceremony is held in the summer.

Students who are on the graduation list but find they are not able to complete the program requirements before graduation should notify the graduate recruitment and retention specialist as soon as possible. They may then reapply for graduation in a subsequent semester.

## 9. MSW ACADEMIC POLICIES

### Grading Policies

Grades offered in SPA courses, are based on an A to F scale, with each letter grade representing the following standard narrative description:

**A** = Work beyond the level of a typical graduate student; exemplary work. (An A equals 4 grade points, an A- equals 3.7 points; there is no A+ grade.)

**B** = Work typical of a graduate student; indicates student has attained the knowledge and skills intended for the course. (A B+ equals 3.3, a B equals 3.0, and a B- equals 2.7 points.)

**C** = Performance is below graduate-level expectations. (A C+ earns 2.3 grade points, a C yields 2.0).

**D** = Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D equals 1.0 grade point).

**F** = Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication that the student can succeed in a graduate program.

Please note that students must receive at least a B- in all courses applied to the MSW degree.

The calculation of a student's *overall* grade point average (GPA) shall be based on all coursework applied to the degree, including any courses taken as a non-degree seeking student. (NOTE: Courses taken in non-degree status are not included in the overall calculation of graduate school GPA on the official transcripts but are included in the overall calculation of GPA as conducted by SPA staff for graduation purposes.)

### Field Grading Policies

Field courses are evaluated by the field instructors, the Director of MSW Field Education, and, when taught by a part-time faculty member, that individual. The instructor of record assigns the final grade. Field liaisons review progress mid-semester and assist the field instructor and student in identifying any areas that need improvement. The learning plan outlines the specific tasks that will demonstrate each of the nine core competencies. The time log is used to keep track of both hours spent in the field and time spent working on tasks that relate to core competencies. Field competency evaluations are used to evaluate academic and professional performance of students in the nine core competencies and are factored into the final grade as outlined in the syllabus.

### Standards of Performance

In order to be in good standing, students must have an overall GPA of 3.0 or better in all coursework. A grade of B- or better is required in all courses. The academic performance of each student will be reviewed at the end of each semester. A student who has a GPA of less than 3.0 will be placed on probation for a period of one year; additionally, any student receiving a grade of F in any course is automatically placed on probation. Any student on probation must meet with the MSW Program Director prior to registration.

After a student has been placed on probation, she/he/they have a maximum of two semesters, or one calendar year, to raise her/his/their GPA to 3.0. Failure to raise the cumulative GPA to 3.0 in the time period outlined will result in suspension from the program.

A suspended student is eligible to apply for readmission one year after removal from the program. Approval or rejection of this application rests with the MSW Program Director.

### **Time Limit**

Master's degree students must complete all coursework and degree requirements within six years of registration in their first course. Exceptions must be approved in writing by the Dean of the School of Public Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **Revalidation Process**

The Graduate School does not allow any course older than six years to be applied to a degree unless it has been revalidated by program faculty. The objective of course revalidation is to assure that the student's knowledge of course material is current.

On rare occasions, the MSW faculty will consider (but not guarantee) revalidation of a course completed more than 6 years but less than 9 years prior to graduation. It is the student's responsibility to make a cogent case for why the course material is applicable to the MSW degree and still current. The MSW Program Director and MSW faculty will review the request and make a determination if the course revalidation process is approved based on the materials provided.

In such cases, the following process apply.

1. Course revalidation will only be considered for courses in which at least a B- was earned.
2. Students will submit a Course Validation form (available from the graduate recruitment and retention specialist) for each course in question to the MSW Program Director.
3. The MSW Program Director will schedule a meeting to include the student and a second faculty member with content expertise related to the course in question. After that meeting, the MSW Program Director will notify the student if she/he/they are approved to continue the revalidation process.
4. If the student is approved to continue the process, she/he/they will submit to the MSW Program Director written review of what was learned in class, how the course applies to his/her/their profession, and what has changed in the field since the course was taken.
5. The MSW Program Director and/or a faculty content expert will conduct a second discussion with the student to discuss the paper and ask any additional questions needed to assess the currency of the student's knowledge.
6. The MSW Program Director will inform the student and the graduate recruitment and retention specialist of the decision on revalidating the course.



## **Incompletes, Withdrawals, and Repeating Courses**

### **Incompletes**

A grade of Incomplete may be granted when a student has successfully completed a substantial portion of the course (75% or more) *and* is prevented from completing the class by circumstances beyond his/her/their control. The course instructor has discretion as to whether to grant an Incomplete, and students should be aware that not all faculty will do so. If the instructor agrees to grant an Incomplete, the student must make arrangements to complete the remaining coursework with the original instructor within one year, although instructors may impose a shorter completion deadline at their discretion, which should be in writing. The student may not “sit in” on the class in subsequent semesters.

Once the coursework is completed, the instructor will change the I grade to a letter grade. The Incomplete notation will appear along with the final grade on the student’s transcript. If the coursework is not completed within a year, the Incomplete will automatically change to an F. Incompletes for the capstone seminar are rarely granted and only in exceptional circumstances.

### **Drops and Withdrawals**

Deadlines for dropping a course are set by the Office of the Registrar and posted on the Academic Calendar each semester. Students are responsible for knowing the UCCS deadlines and procedures for dropping and adding courses.

Students will be allowed to drop and add of their own accord through census date (the 12th day of classes of the regular semester or the 6th day of classes of the summer term). Courses that meet less than the full 16-week term in fall and spring and 8 weeks in the summer have special pro-rated drop and add deadlines. Drop and add deadlines and UCCS guidelines are published in the [Course Information Center](#).

There are no refunds on individual courses dropped after the course census date.

Students must initiate a drop or withdrawal and follow the appropriate procedures. Students who fail to do this and do not complete the coursework will be issued a letter grade of “F” for the course.

### **Retroactive Grade Changes**

Students are not permitted to request grade changes for courses in which a final letter grade (other than an Incomplete) has been received except as a result of instructor error or as otherwise warranted through the academic grievance process. A student may not enter into an agreement with an instructor to retroactively change a final letter grade based on work completed by the student after the course has ended.

### **Repeating Courses**

A student who receives a grade of B- or below in a course may repeat that course once, with the approval of the MSW Program Director, provided the course has not been previously applied toward a degree. The grade received in a repeated course may substitute for the original grade and only the latter grade will be used in calculating the graduate program GPA required for graduation. However, all grades received during the student’s graduate school experience will appear on the student's transcript and will be used in calculating the student's University GPA. These and other [UCCS Graduate School policies](#) may apply.

## **Student Academic Ethics Code**

All students enrolled in credit or non-credit courses at UCCS are bound by the UCCS Student Academic Ethics Code Policy and the UCCS Student Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct is to maintain the general welfare of the university community. The university strives to make the campus community a place of study, work, and residence where people are treated, and treat one another, with respect and courtesy.

The following information in italics is taken directly from the policy.

*Any individual who has a good faith belief that a Code violation has taken place should immediately report the circumstances to the faculty member of the course involved or to the Program Director/chair of the department where the course is offered.*

*If a faculty member has reason to believe that a Code violation has occurred (due either to the faculty member's own observation or due to a report by a third party), the faculty member shall discuss the matter with the student, provide the student with the supporting documentation and ask the student for a response.*

*If the student admits to the Code violation or the faculty member finds that a Code violation has occurred, then it is the faculty member's prerogative to impose a sanction at the course level. Such sanctions may include, but are not limited to, the following:*

- a. downgrading the student on the assignment/exam/activity in which the academic Code violation occurred, with or without the opportunity to redo;*
- b. failing the student on the assignment/exam/activity in which the academic Code violation occurred, with or without the opportunity to redo;*
- c. lowering the student's grade for the course;*
- d. failing the student for the course.*

*If the faculty member believes that a sanction more severe than a course-level sanction should be levied, then the faculty member shall follow all department and college procedures for such sanctions. The Program Director or Dean may levy more severe sanctions including probation, suspension, expulsion, or withholding or revoking a degree.*

Students may dispute the faculty member's finding that a Code violation has occurred by following the appeals process outlined below. Students may not appeal course-level sanctions.

### **Step One: Filing the Appeal**

If the student contends that s/he is innocent of a Code violation and is unable to resolve the situation with the faculty member(s), s/he should file a written appeal with the MSW Program Director. Absent unusual circumstances, the appeal should be filed within 30 days after the dispute.

The written appeal may be filed via e-mail or delivered directly to the MSW Program Director. The appeal should contain all relevant information.

### **Step Two: Investigating the Appeal**

The MSW Program Director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal, forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved, and begin an investigation. S/he may request additional information from the student and faculty member(s) involved.

In the event that the MSW Program Director is involved in the dispute, s/he shall refer the investigation of the appeal to the assistant Dean of the School of Public Affairs for investigation.

### **Step Three: Decision by the MSW Program Director**

Within 30 days of the filing of the appeal, the MSW Program Director shall provide a written report containing his/her decision to the student and the faculty member(s).

### **Appealing the Decision of the MSW Program Director to the Assistant Dean**

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MSW Program Director, the student may appeal to the assistant Dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the Program Director's decision, following the same procedure specified above. The assistant Dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MSW Program Director in deciding the disposition of the appeal, and any other materials s/he considers relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the Program Director's decision, the assistant Dean shall provide a written report containing his/her decision on the disposition of the appeal to the student, the faculty member(s), and the MSW Program Director.

### **Appealing the Decision of the Assistant Dean to the Dean**

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MSW Program Director and the assistant Dean, the student may appeal to the Dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the assistant Dean's decision, following the same procedure specified above. The Dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MSW Program Director and assistant Dean in deciding the disposition of the appeal, and any other materials s/he considers relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the assistant Dean's decision, the Dean shall provide a written report containing his/her decision on the disposition of the grievance to all of the parties involved.

### ***Campus-Level Appeals***

Students may dispute the faculty member's finding that a Code violation has occurred at the campus level only after exhausting the SPA appeals process. Students may not appeal course-level sanctions but may appeal more severe program- or School-level sanctions such as probation, suspension, expulsion, or withholding or revoking of a degree as levied by the School. This process is outlined in the [Student Academic Ethics Code Policy](#).

### **Student Academic Complaints and Appeals**

Formal procedures by which a currently enrolled student may seek to remedy academic and/or professional complaints within the School of Public Affairs are described below. Student appeals are challenges to academic actions or decisions, including but not limited to actions such as an academic grade or evaluation of a student's work in a course, seminar, or other academic forum; a decision with respect

to a student's academic standing in a program or at the School; unjust treatment by a faculty member in a class; or actions related to thesis or culminating experience procedures.

**Step One: Informal Resolution:** The student is strongly encouraged to first attempt to informally resolve the grievance through discussion with the faculty member(s) involved.

**Step Two: Filing the Grievance:** If the student is unable to resolve the dispute with the faculty member(s), he or she should file a written grievance with the MSW Program Director. Absent unusual circumstances, the grievance should be filed within 30 days after the student learns of the event that gives rise to the grievance.

- The written grievance may be filed via e-mail or delivered directly to the MSW Program Director. The grievance should clearly state the basis for the complaint and the remedy requested, and should include any evidence that supports the grievance, such as class syllabi, assignments, and statements from other students.
- Students should be aware that grades and other evaluations of student work are traditionally within the jurisdiction of individual instructors and are not likely to be changed absent evidence that the faculty member 1) determined the grade based on considerations other than student performance; 2) substantially differed from previously announced criteria or procedures in determining the grade; or 3) violated university or school policy in determining the grade. The student bears the burden of proof on these allegations.

**Step Three: Investigating the Grievance:** The MSW Program Director will acknowledge receipt of the grievance, forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved, and begin the investigation of the circumstances of the grievance. S/he may request additional information from the student and faculty member(s) involved.

- If the grievance involves the need for substantial academic expertise in a particular field in order to assess whether there is a basis for the grievance, the Program Director may appoint a panel of faculty members with expertise in the area to investigate the grievance and recommend a decision to the Program Director.
- In the event that the MSW Program Director is involved in the grievance, s/he shall refer the investigation of the grievance to the assistant Dean of the School of Public Affairs for investigation pursuant to the rules of the Graduate School.

**Step Four: Decision by the MSW Program Director:** Within 30 days of the filing of the grievance, the MSW Program Director shall provide a written report containing his/her decision on the disposition of the grievance to the student and the faculty member(s).

**Appealing the Decision of the MSW Program Director to the Assistant Dean:** If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MSW Program Director, the student may appeal to the Assistant Dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the Program Director's decision, following the same procedure specified in Step Two above. The assistant Dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MSW Program Director in deciding the disposition of the grievance, and any other materials s/he considers relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the Program Director's decision, the assistant Dean shall provide a written report containing his/her/their decision on the disposition of the grievance to the student, the faculty member(s), and the MSW Program Director.

**Appealing the Decision of the Assistant Dean to the Dean:** If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MSW Program Director and the Assistant Dean, the student may appeal to the Dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the Assistant Dean's decision, following the same procedure specified in Step Two above. The Dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MSW Program Director and assistant Dean in deciding the disposition of the grievance, and any other materials she/he/they consider relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the Assistant Dean's decision, the Dean shall provide a written report containing his/her/their decision on the disposition of the grievance to all of the parties involved.

**Campus-Level Appeals:** Grade appeals are decided within the School of Public Affairs; the Dean has final jurisdiction. If a resolution to the problem identified in the student's appeal on other academic issues cannot be reached on the department or School level, the student may submit a written appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School according to Article VI of Graduate School Policies and Procedures.

### **Termination of Enrollment Due to Ethical Breaches**

Students can be dismissed from the MSW program for various infractions that constitute ethical breaches. These behaviors / choices can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program. The following list of behaviors presents some of the most important of these infractions but is not exhaustive:

1. Documented behavior that is inconsistent with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers;
2. Documented problems in behavior or performance, which raise questions from the faculty or field instructor about the student's suitability for professional social work. The following list is not exhaustive:
  - a. Forced or coerced sexual behavior;
  - b. Sexual activity with clients including, but not limited to, kissing, fondling, or sexual intercourse;
  - c. Physical actions, such as hitting, spanking, or slapping, directed at clients, students, faculty, or staff;
  - d. Physical or emotional threats directed toward clients, students, faculty, or staff.
  - e. Acceptance of clients' gifts or money that are not considered standard payment for services received on behalf of the student's agency or field setting; students shall not ask for nor communicate an expectation of gifts from clients;
  - f. Illegal or unethical behavior that limits or takes away clients' rights, that results in financial, material, or emotional loss for clients, or that results in financial, material, or emotional gain for social work students; and
  - g. Sexual harassment.
3. Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty or disruption;
4. Failure of student to maintain a 3.0 GPA beyond one semester of academic probation; and
5. Failure to follow policies and rules as outlined in the MSW Student Handbook or as outlined in the MSW Field Manual.
6. Dispute policy is included in this handbook under the section Termination of Enrollment Due to Ethical Breaches.

## **Procedures for Addressing Ethical Breaches**

Concerns about unethical behavior will be addressed by the MSW program committee. If the unethical behavior occurs in regard to academic coursework other than field placement, the program retention committee will consist of: the student's advisor, the classroom instructor, and one additional faculty member. If the unethical behavior occurs in regard to field placement, the program retention committee will consist of: the student's advisor, the MSW field coordinator, and the field liaison.

If the unethical behavior occurs in regard to a student organization event, the program retention committee will consist of: the student's advisor, the faculty liaison to the student organization, and another faculty member.

The program retention committee will review oral and written reports of the student's unethical behavior. The student will be given the opportunity to address the committee. The committee will deliberate and decide whether or not to dismiss the student. If a decision is made to dismiss, the student will be given a letter explaining the rationale behind the decision. Students who wish to appeal the decision to terminate must first write a letter of appeal to the Department chair. If the dispute is not resolved by the Department chair, students must follow the Graduate School procedures outlined by the Dean of Students guide for Student Conduct.

## **Response to Significant Situations or Events**

UCCS has a number of response mechanisms in place to respond to student crisis situations, or to incidents or behaviors involving students that threaten the quality of campus life. Crisis situations may be accidental, occur without warning, or be intentional and meant to cause harm to students or the campus community.

The CARE (Campus Assessment Response and Evaluation) Team will assess and coordinate responses to significant campus situations and events involving University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) students, which require intervention in order to assist the community and its members to return to a more homeostatic state of functioning. These events may include death or significant trauma, problematic student situations involving medical or psychological concerns, and campus emergency situations that directly affect the well-being of students.

The CARE Team has the authority to respond and coordinate intervention to all student crisis incidents with the concurrence of the Chancellor. Issues of inappropriate student conduct are referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. Allegations of criminal wrong doing will be referred to Public Safety. Allegations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination shall be referred to the Office of Institutional Equity in accordance with university policy.

The CARE Team will confer and/or convene to respond to patterns or instances of dysfunctional behavior, and questions, concerns, and inquiries concerning student behavior. They will facilitate a coordinated campus response to crisis incidents, threats or potential threats that may affect the well-being of students, campus, or broader community. Coordinated responses may include, but are not limited to, identification of and referral to appropriate support services and resources on- or off-campus; informal resolution measures such as mediation; facilitated dialogue between parties involved; discussions in residence halls or at other campus locations, campus notices and fact sharing; and promotion of wider educational awareness, prevention, and outreach.

Please refer to the CARE Team website for referrals and additional information: <https://www.uccs.edu/dos/care>.

Standards for student conduct, including the UCCS Student Classroom/Course-Related Behavior Policy may be found under the Dean of Students - Student Conduct. Faculty members are authorized to exclude disruptive students from the classroom or other academic sites. Upon exclusion, it is incumbent on the student to make every reasonable effort to resolve the matter with the faculty member involved. If the student and faculty member cannot resolve the matter, either may request mediation by the MSW Program Director. If the excluded student cannot resolve the matter satisfactorily per the procedures outlined here and enumerated in the UCCS Student Classroom/Course-Related Behavior Policy, the student may request that the Dean of students review the matter and may continue with the appeal process as put forth in that policy.

### **Student Participation in Formulating and Modifying Policies**

Students in the UCCS MSW Program have the right and responsibility to actively participate in the formulating and modification of policies. Student feedback will be elicited using formal evaluations. Students also encouraged to actively participate on search committees and the MSW Professional Advisory Board.