MSW Student Handbook
Effective Fall 2024

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Welcome from the MSW Program Director

Congratulations on becoming a Master of Social Work (MSW) graduate student at Western Kentucky University (WKU)! We are excited that you have chosen WKU and will be joining us to further develop your professional skills and achieve your career goals. We look forward to working with you!

The social work department faculty are passionate social workers who have a variety of diverse practice experiences and research interests that they bring to the classroom and department. They are committed to your success and supporting you as you develop into an advanced level social worker. With this in mind, a program and learning environment has been developed that we hope you will find challenging, yet engaging, diverse, collaborative and supportive.

The WKU MSW program is accredited nationally by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The MSW curriculum emphasizes social work practice at the advanced generalist level in rural communities. The MSW degree is considered the terminal degree in the discipline, and with this degree you will become a member of a strong and proud profession. Many graduates from this program have become outstanding leaders, practitioners, researchers, advocates and educators at the local as well as state and national levels. We look forward to the contributions you will make as social workers to the profession and to the populations and communities you impact, as both social justice change agents, and as individuals launching a personal journey toward professional growth and development.

This handbook will serve as your guide throughout your journey through the MSW program. It provides you with an overview of the curriculum as well as relevant policies and procedures related to academic and professional performance. Please carefully review the information in this handbook. Let us know if you have questions or how we can support your success.

Best Wishes,

Dr. Erin Warfel, LCSW

MSW Program Director

[Department of Social Work](#) Administrators and Staff

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Pictures, contact information, and curriculum vitaes of all staff and faculty can be found at https://wku.edu/socialwork/staff/index.php

Context of Practice

Although social work education is built upon a common knowledge, values, and skill base, each social work program in the United States is unique, based upon its university affiliation, regional location, population needs, and practice focus. Western Kentucky University's social work program is informed by all of these.

Western Kentucky University (WKU) Information

Western Kentucky University is part of the public Kentucky postsecondary education system, which includes eight four-year institutions and a community and technical college system comprised of 16 institutions. By statute, Western Kentucky University is governed by its Board of Regents. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) serves as a coordinating board for the system.

WKU's undergraduate division provides four-year programs leading to bachelor of arts, bachelor of fine arts, bachelor of interdisciplinary studies, bachelor of music, bachelor of science, bachelor of science in nursing, and bachelor of social work degrees. There are 101 academic majors and 110 academic minors available.

Thirteen associate degree programs are offered leading to associate of arts, associate of interdisciplinary studies, associate of science, and associate of science in nursing degrees. Additionally, 36 undergraduate certificate programs are offered.

The Graduate School offers the following degrees: master of accountancy, master of arts, master of arts in education, master of arts in teaching, master of business administration, master of fine arts, master of health administration, master of music, master of public administration, master of public health, master of science, master of science in nursing and master of social work. WKU also offers the specialist degree in education, Rank I and Rank II programs, and doctoral programs in Educational Leadership, Nursing Practice, Physical Therapy, and Psychology. In addition, 36 graduate certificate programs are offered. (2022 Western Kentucky University Fact Book, p. 12-14)

WKU is committed to ensuring value in a holistic learning experience through high standards for student achievement and conduct, a strong faculty, technological innovation, personalized attention, broad access, and public accountability for actions and outcomes.

WKU recognizes that its mission continues to evolve in response to regional, national, and global changes, and the need for lifelong learning.

WKU Mission Statement
Western Kentucky University (WKU) prepares students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society. The University provides research, service and lifelong learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and other constituents. WKU enriches the quality of life for those within its reach.

WKU is engaged in internationally acclaimed, student-and-learning-centered academic programs. The WKU experience occurs on several unique campus environments and through an overarching spirit which attracts an intellectually exciting and diverse family of the nation's best students. WKU provides students of all backgrounds with rigorous academic programs in education, the liberal arts and sciences, the health sciences, and business, with emphasis at the baccalaureate and masters levels, complemented by relevant associate and doctoral level programs. The University places a premium on student learning; it is committed to ensuring value in a holistic learning experience through high standards for student achievement and conduct, a strong faculty, technological innovation, personalized attention, broad access, and public accountability for actions and outcomes. Out-of-the-classroom and study abroad experiences enhance learning, promote diversity, and contribute to the success of students.

The University encourages engaged research and public service in support of economic development, quality of life, and improvement of education at all levels. WKU faculty contribute to the identification and solution of key social, economic, scientific, health, and environmental problems. An inspiring and talented faculty promotes a high level of creative activity and diverse scholarship and an entrepreneurial attitude designed to expand knowledge, improve instruction, increase learning, and provide applied solutions toward high-quality service to the state and nation. The University directly supports its constituents in its designated service areas of Kentucky with professional and technical expertise, cultural enrichment, and educational assistance.

Maintaining a campus of distinctive history and character, WKU sustains a student population of increasing quality. It fulfills its responsibility for access through its main and regional campuses, and through extensive distance learning opportunities. WKU recognizes that its mission continues to evolve in response to regional, national, and global changes, and the need for lifelong learning.

The WKU Graduate School

The Graduate School serves both as the point of contact for prospective and current graduate students and as a liaison between students and faculty members of all graduate programs. The MSW program must adhere to Graduate School policies as well as the policies of WKU. Through faculty governance on the Graduate Council, the MSW curriculum is held to high standards of academic excellence and fair policies are developed for our graduate students.

College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) Information

The College of Health and Human Services was established in August 2002, and consists of eight academic units: Allied Health, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), The Department of Applied Human Sciences, The School of Kinesiology, Recreation and Sport, The School of Nursing, Public Health, and Social Work. CHHS also offers **two doctoral degree programs**: Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). Other Units within CHHS include South Central Kentucky Area Health Education Center (SCAHEC), the Dental Hygiene

[Clinic](#), and the [WKU CPR Training Center](#).

The disciplines in the college have their roots in outreach to the community; they all prepare students for their professions by engaging them in activities within the community that applies the theories and concepts learned in the classroom for a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Students are required to complete clinical experiences, field work, or internships through one of the many affiliation agreements with a myriad of health and human service agencies in our region. Two nationally recognized mobile health and wellness units provide ways for students to apply their newly acquired skills in the provision of prevention services to residences in our region. CHHS is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the community through education, service, collaboration, leadership, and scholarship.

CHHS Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Vision

To be an innovative leader in the student-centered, inter-professional preparation of health and human services professionals by providing students with an inclusive, community-engaged, and inter-disciplinary academic experience.

Mission

We prepare health and human services professionals who will work to improve the quality of life in their communities and beyond.

Core Values

The College of Health and Human Services, values each of the following as they are related to teaching, research, and services: diversity, equity and inclusion; community engagement; inter-disciplinary/inter-professional approaches; ethical practice and integrity; collaboration; student-centered, and innovation.

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Bowling Green, KY 42101-1038
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Department of Social Work

Mission

The mission of the Department of Social Work at Western Kentucky University is to prepare competent, ethical, anti-oppressive social work professionals for practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities thereby improving the quality of life in the region and beyond.

MSW Program Mission Statement

Mission

In keeping with the tenets of the program, the purposes of social work, constituent needs, and the regional characteristics of south central and western Kentucky, the mission of the MSW program at WKU is to educate and prepare students for advanced professional social work practice to meet the needs of increasingly diverse rural populations in the community, in Kentucky and in a global society.

MSW Program Goals

The goals of the program are designed to provide a level of competence that includes quality leadership that is grounded in the historical roots of the profession. The needs of the community along with the purposes of the profession influence the four goals of the MSW program. These goals are:

- To produce competent practitioners within rural areas.
- To increase the number of practitioners with professional values and standards of cultural competence who are creative and ethically accountable in their practice with diverse rural populations.
- To apply critical knowledge that cultivates and synthesizes an understanding of the complex needs within the culture of rural communities, including research, training, continuing education, and other relevant projects.
- To impact the social, economic, and political environments of rural areas in order to empower constituents and influence social welfare policies, practices, and services.

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Accreditation

The MSW program at WKU is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The program functions in accordance with the CSWE standards. Full details of the latest educational policy can be downloaded from http://cswe.org/

Purposes of the Social Work Profession

The social work profession receives its sanction from public and private auspices and is the primary profession in the development, provision, and evaluation of social services. Professional social workers are leaders in a variety of organizational settings and service delivery systems within a global context.

The profession of social work is based on the values of service, social and economic justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, and integrity and competence in practice. With these values as defining principles, the purposes of social work are:

1) To enhance human well-being and alleviate poverty, oppression, and other forms of social injustice.
2) To enhance the social functioning and interactions of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities by involving them in accomplishing goals, developing resources, and preventing and alleviating distress.
3) To formulate and implement social policies, services, and programs that meet basic human needs and support the development of human capacities.
4) To pursue policies, services, and resources through advocacy and social or political actions that promote social and economic justice.
5) To develop and use research, knowledge, and skills that advance social work practice.
6) To develop and apply practice in the context of diverse cultures.

Purposes of Social Work Education

The purposes of social work education are to prepare competent and effective professionals, to develop social work knowledge, and to provide leadership in the development of service delivery systems. Social work education is grounded in the profession's history, purposes, and philosophy and is based on a body of knowledge, values, and skills. Social work education enables students to integrate the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession for competent practice.

MSW Program Performance Indicators

In 2008 CSWE adopted a competency-based education framework for its EPAS. As in related health and human service professions, the policy moved from a model of curriculum design focused on content (what students should be taught) and structure (the format and organization of education components) to one focused on student learning outcomes. A competency-based approach refers to identifying and assessing what students demonstrate in practice. In social work this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. (CSWE, 2015, p.6) These competencies were recently updated in 2022.

According to the Curriculum Policy Statement contained within the Council on Social Work Education's *Handbook of Accreditation Standards and Procedures*, students completing an MSW Program curriculum should be able to do the following after completing the **Generalist Year**:

Competency	Expected Behaviors
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context
	Use self-reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations
	Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication
	Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes
	Use supervision and consultation to guide judgment and behavior
Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice	Advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organization, and community system levels
	Engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice	Demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels for human rights at the individual and system levels
	Demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.
	Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice	Identify ethical, culturally informed anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in qualitative and quantitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work
	Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research
	Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice	Use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services
	Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies
	Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies
Competency 7: Assess with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Apply theories of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks when assessing clients and constituencies
	Demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed upon plan
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals
	Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually developed goals
	Incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes
	Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Advanced Generalist Year (Specialized Year):

Competency	Expected Behaviors
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to a rural context
	Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in rural practice situations
	Demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written and electronic communication both in rural communities and in practice settings
	Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate advanced practice outcomes in rural settings
	Use supervision and consultation to guide judgement and behavior
	Actively participate in professional social work associations/organizations
	Design and manage effective self-care strategies to reduce the likelihood of compassion fatigue and burnout.
Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice	Engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice contexts
	Critically analyze the intersections of social, racial, economic, and environmental justice rural contexts
	Advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational and community system levels
Competency 3: Engage in Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice	Analyze the holistic and systemic nature of problems in rural settings taking care to attend to the special factors of rurality such as diverse cultural backgrounds, dual relationships, inadequate transportation, extreme poverty, difficult access to health care, and disenfranchisement from political processes.
	Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of ADEI in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels in rural settings
	Demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organization, community, research and policy levels
	Demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-	Use practice experience and theoretical underpinning of anti-racist and anti-oppressive evidence-based practice models to inform scientific inquiry and research
	Identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work

informed Practice	Integrate and adapt research evidence to inform and improve ADEI practice, policy and service delivery programs in rural settings
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice	Use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare polices affect the delivery of and access to support services in rural areas; and
	Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in rural settings
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and interprofessional conceptual frameworks to engage with rural clients and constituencies;
	Ensure informed consent while using empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills at an advanced level to effectively engage in culturally responsive practice in rural settings; and
	Utilize the most appropriate anti-racist and anti-oppressive engagement strategy according to each practice context.
Competency 7: Assess with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Collect and organize client-driven data, and skillfully apply critical thinking to interpret information from rural clients and constituencies;
	Apply theories of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing rural clients and constituencies;
	Demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed upon plan based on the critical assessment strengths, needs, and challenges in rural settings;
	Modify appropriate culturally responsive intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of rural clients and constituencies; and
	Consider aspects intrinsic in rural settings impacting assessment such as connections with church communities, neighbors, extended family, fictive kin, and other informal resources
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Engage with l clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence informed interventions to achieve rural client and constituency goals;
	Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks in interventions with rural clients and constituencies;
	Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes in rural settings;
	Provide leadership in program development, administration, and evaluation; clinical and organizational supervision; research development and utilization; and policy creation, reform and implementation; and
	Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually developed

	goals
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	Select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes in rural settings
	Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other culturally responsive, interprofessional frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes for rural clients and constituencies; and
	Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in rural contexts

Programs of Study

The Master of Social Work (MSW) program at Western Kentucky University (WKU) prepares students for professional social work practice at the graduate level to meet the needs of increasingly diverse rural populations. It is particularly dedicated to addressing the workforce needs of agencies that serve families and communities. Moreover, the MSW curriculum emphasizes social work practice at an advanced level in rural communities. See Appendix C for the MSW Curriculum Philosophy

There are two program options for students meeting the admission requirements outlined below. The Traditional Option requires 60 semester hours for students with a baccalaureate degree in any field and may be taken full or part-time. The Advanced Standing Option requires 30 semester hours for students who have earned a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from an accredited social work program and who have fulfilled all admission requirements. The Advanced Standing Option may be taken full- or part-time as well. These programs are delivered on the main campus in Bowling Green, KY or in a completely online format.

All program options require students to complete the co-requisites SWRK 622 and SWRK 661 as capstone courses prior to graduation. These courses integrate the entire curriculum in a comprehensive practice experience. Additionally, students are required to successfully complete a comprehensive examination, the Practice Readiness Exam (PRE), prior to graduation.

The program specific plans of study are as follows:

2 Year Full-Time Traditional
60 Credit Hours (Bowling Green, KY Campus and Online)

Year 1 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	501	Diversity, Oppression, and Equity in SW Practice
SWRK	510	Human Behavior in the Social Environment
SWRK	520	Generalist Social Work Practice
SWRK	540	Foundation of Social Research Methods
SWRK	560	Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 1 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	522	Group Dynamics in Social Work Practice
SWRK	523	Rural community Organization and Development
SWRK	530	Foundation of Social Welfare Policy
SWRK	561	Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1*

Year 2 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches for Rural Practice
SWRK	623	Social Work Clinical Assessment and Intervention
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 2*

Year 2 Spring Semester   *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	622	Integrated Social Work Practice with Families
SWRK	630	Rural Social Work Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 3*

Year 2 – May   Graduation

*Electives may be taken in Winter and Summer terms. If an elective is completed in the summer following graduation, the graduation date will be August.

4 Year Part-Time Traditional Program
60 Credit Hours (Bowling Green, KY Campus Only)

Year 1 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	501	Diversity, Oppression, and Equity in SW Practice
SWRK	510	Human Behavior in the Social Environment
SWRK	540	Generalist of Social Work Research Methods

Year 1 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	530	Foundation of Social Welfare Policy
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1*

Year 2 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	520	Generalist Social Work Practice
SWRK	560	Foundation Field Practicum I

Year 2 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	522	Group Dynamics in Social Work Practice
SWRK	561	Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	523	Rural Community Organization and Development

Year 3 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	623	Social Work Clinical Assessment and Intervention
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 2*

Year 3 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	630	Rural Social Work Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 3*

Year 4 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches for Rural Practice
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I

<u>Year 4 Spring Semester</u> *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

<u>Course</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>
SWRK	622	Integrated Social Work Practice with Families
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II

Year 4 – May Graduation

*Electives may be taken in Winter and Summer terms. If an elective is completed in the summer following graduation, the graduation date will be August.

1 Year Full-Time Advanced Standing
30 Credit Hours (Bowling Green, KY Campus and Online Cohort Only)

Year 1- Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	612	Social Work in Diverse Rural Areas
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches for Rural Practice
SWRK	623	Social Work Clinical Assessment and Intervention
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 1 Spring Semester   *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	622	Integrated Social Work Practice with Families
SWRK	630	Rural Social Work Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1*

Year 1 – May Graduation

* Elective may be taken in Winter, Spring, or Summer term. If an elective is completed in the summer following graduation, the graduation date will be August.

2 Year Part-Time Advanced Standing
30 Credit Hours (Bowling Green, KY Campus and Online)

Year 1 – Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	612	Social Work in Diverse Rural Areas
SWRK	623	Social Work Clinical Assessment and Intervention

Year 1- Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	630	Rural Social Work Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1*

Year 2- Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches for Rural Practice
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 2- Spring Semester — *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	622	Integrated Social Work Practice with Families
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II

Year 2 – May Graduation

* Elective may be taken in Winter, Spring, or Summer term. If an elective is completed in the summer following graduation, the graduation date will be August.

3 Year Traditional Program
60 Credit Hours (Bowling Green, KY and Online)

Year 1 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	501	Diversity, Oppression, and Equity in SW Practice
SWRK	510	Human Behavior in the Social Environment
SWRK	540	Generalist of Social Work Research Methods

Year 1 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	530	Foundation of Social Welfare Policy
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1*

Year 2 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	520	Generalist Social Work Practice
SWRK	560	Foundation Field Practicum I

Year 2 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	522	Group Dynamics in Social Work Practice
SWRK	523	Rural Community Organization and Development
SWRK	561	Generalist Field Practicum II

Year 3 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches for Rural Practice
SWRK	623	Social Work Clinical Assessment and Intervention
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 2*

Year 3 Spring Semester   *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	622	Integrated Social Work Practice with Families
SWRK	630	Rural Social Work Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 3*

Year 3 – May Graduation

**Customized plans of study are available with a spring start

MSW Spring Admission Curriculum Schedule Options
Part Time Traditional
60 Credit Hours (Bowling Green, KY and Online)

Year 1 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	530	Foundation of Social Welfare Policy
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1*

Year 1 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	501	Diversity, Oppression, and Equity in SW Practice
SWRK	510	Human Behavior in the Social Environment
SWRK	540	Foundation of Social Work Methods

Year 2 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 2*
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 3*

Year 2 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	520	Generalist Social Work Practice
SWRK	560	Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 3 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	522	Group Dynamics in SW Practice
SWRK	523	Rural Community Organization and Development
SWRK	561	Generalist Field Practicum II

Year 3 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	623	SW Clinical Assessment and Intervention

Year 4 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	630	Rural SW Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research

Year 5 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 5 Spring Semester *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	622	Integrated SW Practice with Families
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II

Year 5 – May Graduation

*Electives may be taken in Winter and Summer terms. If an elective is completed in the summer following graduation, the graduation date will be August.

Full Time Traditional
60 Credit Hours (Bowling Green and Online)

Year 1 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	530	Foundation of SW Policy
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 1* and/or 2*

Year 1 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	501	Diversity, Oppression, and Equity in SW Practice
SWRK	510	Human Behavior in the Social Environment
SWRK	520	Generalist Social Work Practice
SWRK	540	Foundation of Social Research Methods
SWRK	560	Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 2 Spring Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	522	Group Dynamics in SW Practice
SWRK	523	Rural Community Organization and Development
SWRK	561	Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 2* and/or 3*

Year 2 Fall Semester

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	610	Social Work Administration and Supervision
SWRK	620	Advanced Psycho-Social Approaches for Rural Practice
SWRK	623	Social Work Clinical Assessment and Intervention
SWRK	660	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum I

Year 3 Spring Semester   *Practice Readiness Exam (Comprehensive Exam)*

Course	Number	Name
SWRK	622	Integrated Social Work Practice with Families
SWRK	630	Rural Social Work Policy
SWRK	640	Applied Social Work Research
SWRK	661	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum II
SWRK	ELECTIVE	Elective 3* if needed

Year 3 – May Graduation

*Electives may be taken in Winter and Summer terms. If an elective is completed in the summer following graduation, the graduation date will be August.

Course Listings

Course descriptions can be viewed in the [WKU Graduate Catalog](#).

MSW Program Academic Policies

Academic Advising

The MSW Program places high value on the advising process. Advisors hold regular office hours in person or online. Students are assigned a faculty advisor prior to program orientation.

Student Responsibilities:
The specific responsibilities of students include:
1. Plan a schedule for each semester to ensure that there is reasonable progress toward the degree. The faculty advisor will guide and offer counsel in this process.
2. Complete all courses for which the student registers.
3. Know the contents of the Graduate Catalog and MSW Student Handbook. Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand.
4. Participate in advising prior to registration.
5. Notify advisor in timely way if student is experiencing a problem.
6. Complete all required forms in a timely manner. (See Appendix F)

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities:
The specific responsibilities of the advisors include both academic and professional advising activities such as the following:
1. Assist students in selection of courses and program planning to prepare them for professional social work practice.
2. Clear students for course registration.
3. Provide an opportunity for students to evaluate their personal commitment to social work and readiness to enter the profession.
4. Engage students in comprehensive evaluation of their performance in the educational program.

5. Refer students with personal challenges to appropriate resources within the University and community, i.e., medical, psychological, financial, housing, childcare, employment, career counseling, etc.
6. Participate in committees established to evaluate academic and/or professional performance.
7. Advise students regarding future career options, graduate jobs, and difficulties in the program.

Faculty advisors provide both academic and professional advisement to students. Academic advising may be provided by either staff or faculty and includes courses required, credits earned, and tutoring needs of students. Professional advising includes activities such as post graduate job recommendations and counseling and support during field or other professional activities. Most students will participate in combined academic and professional advisement sessions. It is important to make the most of your regular advisor meetings each semester by coming prepared with questions and options that you are considering to meet your unique professional goals.

Academic Load

A typical academic load for graduate students ranges from 12 to 15 semester hours. No student may carry more than 15 hours per semester. Elective courses may be taken in the summer or winter to reduce the fall or spring load. It is recommended that approved electives be taken within the Department of Social Work. Electives in other departments may be approved based on need. At least one elective course must be taken within the Social Work Department. Typically, only courses numbered 500 and above are taken by graduate students. A course designated 400G may be taken with permission of the student's advisor. Undergraduate courses will not count toward MSW degree requirements.

Awards for Students

The MSW Program has several awards for outstanding graduate students. In order to recognize as many students as possible, no student may receive more than one award. Students may be nominated for multiple awards. The student who receives these awards must meet the following criteria:
- Be graduating from the MSW program in the year it is awarded.
- Be a positive influence on the WKU community.
- Be in good standing with the Program and University

- Demonstrate a passion for WKU's MSW Program and communities.
- Demonstrate professional and personal growth during their tenure at WKU.
- Demonstrate a willingness to fight for anything which strengthens the University's Program and communities.
- Demonstrate a commitment to social work values and ethics.
- Demonstrate a commitment to the profession of social work.

The Legacy Award.

The legacy award honors a social work student for their outstanding achievement in all areas of the profession. Nominees of this award are individuals who represent the essence of the profession and possess values and ethics that personify the vision that social work represents. The legacy award is for an individual who displays dedication, trust, drive, and determination within the program as well as their professional careers. They go beyond the basic education criteria as outlined by CSWE and validate themselves as a role model for all social workers. This individual inspires and reflects the heritage we hold so dear.

Spirit Award.

This award is awarded to a graduating MSW student who best embraces the "spirit of WKU" in the MSW program. The student represents the "intangible and unquantifiable yet very real and very deep spirit" which Dr. Ransdell (former WKU president) discussed. They have found ways to put more hours in the day. They have achieved a balance between academics, work, and family, which has been a positive influence on faculty, students, and the community. They possess a passion for education and the community that is an essential part of the Western Spirit. They have truly exemplified the "spirit is the master" in their MSW studies at WKU.

Dr. Dale Smith Social Justice Award.

The Dr. Dale Smith Social Justice Award honors the graduating MSW student who embodies the social work value of social justice through their course work and actions. "Social workers pursue social change [in an effort] to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity." This award honors a student who is committed to achieving social, economic, environmental, and racial justice by advocating for the alleviation of inequities for marginalized communities.
Selection criteria:
• Nominees should be recognized as leaders held in high esteem by other students.
• Nominees should be actively engaged in socially responsible and ethical activism efforts.
• Nominees should encourage other students to become active in social change efforts.

Outstanding Field Student.
This award is presented to a graduating MSW student who demonstrates exemplary service during the field placement. This individual demonstrates outstanding service by focusing on client needs, fostering diversity, promoting individual and team contributions, providing innovative leadership, and responding to challenges with innovative solutions that result in greater performance or opportunity.

Outstanding Graduate Student.
Each year this award is given to the student who demonstrates strong academic and professional skills. This award is forwarded to the College and University for consideration for additional awards. Students who typically receive this award have been active in the student organization(s), their community, and the program. They may have conducted professional development or published articles.

Outstanding Cohort Student Award.
This award is presented to the graduating MSW student who exemplifies the power and resilience of rural Kentucky social workers. This student is dedicated to improving rural communities as evidenced by their volunteer and paid efforts at community change in their local area.

Typical activities of this award winner include the following:
- Participation in local events designed to enhance the community.
- Demonstration of strong advocacy skills at the local and state levels
- Organizing or creating innovative services
- Demonstration of a commitment to strengths based
- Utilization of research as a way to support change efforts.
- Strong Inter-professional collaboration in the community.

Capstone Courses

A capstone course is a culminating experience that allows students to demonstrate all their learning over their MSW Program in one course. All students are required to complete the capstone course **SWRK 661** and its co-requisite course **SWRK 622** prior to graduation.

Class Attendance

Learning in a graduate professional program is based in part on the interaction that occurs between the instructor and the students in the classroom (whether a face-to-face or online format).

Regular attendance at class is an expected responsibility of students. In this program, online interactions are often required. Each course syllabus may have specific attendance requirements.

Credit for Learning Courses

Credit for Learning (CFL) courses may be used as electives for the completion of WKU's graduate social work program if the degree is completed within 6 years from the start of the first CFL course. CFL courses may not be used to meet any core course requirements.

Credit for Life Experience

In accordance with CSWE regulations the MSW program awards no academic credit to students for life and/or previous work experience. Credit toward all social work courses, including the field practicum, must be completed within an academic environment.

Graduate credit will not be awarded for courses taken as an undergraduate. No MSW credit will be given for any course taken while a student is still an undergraduate. This is also in accordance with CSWE requirements.

Dropping and Adding Courses

After the registration period for each semester and before the beginning of the semester, students may make schedule adjustments at times indicated in the WKU Class Schedule Bulletin. The student's advisor or the program director must approve all course additions or withdrawals. The student is responsible for all fees associated with dropping or adding a course. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for further information.

Electronic Policy

Technology applied to or used for a course and/or official departmental business may not be used for any other purpose. Technology includes but is not limited to electronic

mail services (both e-mail and list-serves), the Internet, software, and course web site programs. (See also **WKU Social Media Policy**.)

Activities specifically prohibited include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. Giving or selling e-mail addresses or other personal information regarding students, staff, instructors, or faculty to anyone outside Western Kentucky University.
2. Using e-mail list or list serves for solicitation purposes.
3. Enabling a non-registered individual's access to a course without permission from the instructor of that course.
4. The department does not support the use of pirated software on university computers.

Social Media

Privacy, confidentiality, and professional boundaries must be examined as professional social workers especially in the age of technology. Professional standards found in the NASW Code of Ethics must be strictly followed concerning social media. Students using social media sites are expected to use the highest privacy settings on their social media profiles, so field agency personnel and/or clients cannot access photographs and private information. Students are not permitted to link to or view the social media profiles of clients or employees of the field placement agency. In the event that a student's social media profile or linkage is considered a poor professional practice or an ethical violation, the student issue will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review.

Fairness Policy

The Department of Social Work at Western Kentucky University is committed to the principles of non-discrimination and the practices of Affirmative Action. In the admission, recruitment and retention practices of this department, all efforts will be made to ensure a diverse faculty and student body that reflect the value and importance of differences including but not limited to age, gender, race, culture, religion, ethnicity, physical abilities, and sexual orientation. The Department aims to create a culture of acceptance and inclusion. It is expected that students, faculty, and staff will at all times conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these principles and work toward the creation of a learning environment that is pluralistic.

Field Education Procedures

Field education is the signature pedagogy of social work education. Field education provides students with the practical, "hands-on" application of theories and procedures learned through other courses. The field placement process not only follows an orderly progression, it also attempts to seek an appropriate "fit" between students and their practicum environments. Students will work with Field Supervisors and Liaisons to maximize their individual learning experiences. It is your responsibility to adhere to all policies and procedures described in the WKU MSW Field Manual.

Financial Assistance

Each year the MSW program has scholarship opportunities. Applications are available as described in the section on that particular item. You may discuss these opportunities further with your faculty advisor. The following grants, scholarships, and loans may be available:

Distinguished Minority Fellows (DMF) Program

WKU is committed to assisting individuals from minority groups in obtaining their higher education goals. The Distinguished Minority Fellows Program is designed to help minority students attain graduate degrees by providing tuition as well as employment opportunities.

Admission into the program is competitive and applicants are encouraged to submit the application materials as early as possible. Applications are accepted once annually in the Spring for admission the following Fall semester.

Graduate assistantships.

The Master of Social Work Program offers graduate assistantships depending upon funding. Graduate assistantships require 20 hours of work per week. The award typically involves a stipend, partial tuition remission, and health insurance. The amount varies from year to year. A Graduate Schools' Assistantship Application must be completed with the Graduate School. The Graduate School will then forward appropriate applications to the MSW Program.
Students applying for Graduate Assistantships should expect to complete an interview process. It should be noted that an interview does not guarantee a graduate assistantship.

Loans.

The WKU Financial Aid Office will assist you with determining your eligibility for loans. You must have a FAFSA on file with the Financial Aid Office.

Federal Perkins Loan
This long-term loan is designed to assist the student whose family income and total assets place limitations upon other sources (bank loan, family savings, etc.) of educational funds. The loan is interest free while the student is in school and charges only five percent interest during the repayment period. In addition to the interest-rate advantage, the Perkins Loan can qualify for cancellation under certain conditions.

Federal Stafford Loan
The long-term loan may be secured through the United States Department of Education. Student applicants who qualify for interest subsidy begin repayment after expiration of a six-month grace period after student status ceases.

Research and Travel Grants

Graduate students are invited to submit proposals for University research and/ travel grants. Travel funds are made available on a competitive basis to encourage graduate students to present at a professional meeting or conference. In order to receive travel funding, the student must be presenting at a conference. Additional information including application deadline and required proposal forms may be obtained from the Graduate School Research Grants.

Senior citizen's scholarship

Kentucky residents who are 65 years of age or older on or before the day the semester begins are granted Senior Citizen Scholarships for any undergraduate or graduate college class in which they enroll for credit or to audit in accordance with KRS 164.284. For additional information, contact the Billings and Receivables Office at (270) 745-6381 or billings.receivables@wku.edu.

Veterans Affairs at WKU.

Western Kentucky University has been approved by the Kentucky State Approving Agency and the U.S. Department Veteran's Affairs (VA) for veteran's educational training. The Office of Veteran Affairs assist students with the processing of VA forms for DVA educational benefits, advise students about certain procedural requirements, and certify enrollment of veterans and dependents to the DVA.

Student entitlement is based on VA regulations. Monthly payment is determined by the number of credit hours for which that student is enrolled. The VA Coordinator also closely monitors each veteran's enrollment status and academic program according to DVA guidelines.

As a veteran, you may be entitled to education benefits. Eligibility is determined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. For more information contact The Office of Veterans Affairs at WKU

Grades

Candidates for an MSW degree are required to maintain a combined average grade of B (3.0 grade point average) in all course work. Grades lower than a C may not be used in meeting degree requirements. Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA in all courses taken as a graduate student (including all transfer courses and undergraduate courses). Students who fail to meet the 3.0 GPA requirements for the graduate program and overall cumulative GPA will not be awarded a degree or certificate and will be placed on Academic Probation. The graduate student will have one semester of full-time course work or the equivalent (9 hours) to bring up their GPA. If this is not accomplished within the required time frame, the student will be dismissed from the MSW Program and the Graduate School. (Consult the Graduate School Catalog for the **Academic Standing Policy.**)

Grading linked classes.

There are several courses which are linked in the Program's curriculum. SWRK 520 is linked to SWRK 560. SWRK 522 is linked to SWRK 561. SWRK 620 is linked to SWRK 660. SWRK 622 is linked to SWRK 661. These courses require that students be concurrently enrolled during the appropriate semester. If a student is successfully completing one course, but not doing satisfactorily in the concurrent course (for any reason), the particulars are examined on a case-by-case basis by the designated curriculum committee and MSW Program Director to determine appropriate academic action.

Incomplete grades.

Students are expected to complete a course as required by the instructor. In the event a student requires more time to do so, the student must request an incomplete. All students requesting an incomplete must gain the instructor's approval and the written approval of the MSW Program Director. Requesting an incomplete does not guarantee that the request will be granted. A student may not enroll in subsequent coursework with a grade of "X" unless specifically approved by the MSW Program Director.

Pass/Fail grading.

In the MSW degree program, a grade of Pass/Fail is authorized for SWRK 560, SWRK 561, SWRK 660, and SWRK 661 (field courses). A passing grade is not computed in determining grade point averages. However, a grade of Fail is considered for purposes of academic probation and dismissal from the MSW Program. (See **Graduate Academic Probation and Dismissal Policy**.)

Repeating a course.

MSW students may only repeat an individual course one time. After inability to complete the course successfully within two attempts, the student will be dismissed from the MSW Program. When a student repeats a course, both grades will show on the student's transcript. However, only the newest grade will be used to calculate the graduate GPA.

Graduate Academic Probation and Dismissal

The MSW Program follows the Graduate School's Academic Standing Policy. The Academic Standing Policy can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

In addition to the Graduate School requirements, the MSW Program holds students responsible for both their student conduct as described in the *[WKU Student Code of Conduct](#)* and their professional conduct as described in the *[NASW Code of Ethics](#)* (2021). Failure to comply with these student and professional standards may result in probation or dismissal from the MSW Program. A student who fails to successfully complete the comprehensive exam may be dismissed from the MSW Program as this is aligned with the [Graduate School Policy](#). Dismissal from the MSW Program will result in dismissal from the Graduate School.

Independent Study Policy

The Graduate School indicates that a maximum of 6 hours of workshops, independent studies, special problems, individual special topics, and research or reading in the discipline may be used in any degree program. SWRK 698: Selected Readings in Social Work and SWRK 699: Selected Research in Social Work are two social work courses designated for this purpose.

If you wish to pursue an independent study, you must contact the professor you wish to lead the course for you. Together you need to develop a plan which meets graduate level expectation and includes the independent study application form available in the main departmental office or departmental website. The plan and form are then presented to your advisor for approval. If the advisor approves the plan, the plan and the form are then forwarded to the MSW Program Director for faculty approval. It is always advisable to talk with your advisor prior to developing the full plan for advisor input.

It should be noted that just because one requests an independent study, the program reserves the right to deny requests that do not meet graduate level standards or if appropriate resources (including faculty workload concerns) are not available. Given that independent studies are outside the normal workload expectation of faculty; no faculty member is obligated to provide independent study options.

Institutional Review Board

The Department of Social Work requires students who conduct research to comply with all professional and University guidelines for ethical treatment of subjects through the Office of Research Integrity. Students considering social work research activities must secure a WKU Department of Social Work faculty sponsor.

Human subject is defined by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as "a living individual about whom an investigator obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual or (2) identifiable private information." The regulations extend to the use of human organs, tissue, and body fluids from individually identifiable human subjects as well as to graphic, written, or recorded information derived from individually identifiable human subjects. The use of autopsy materials is governed by applicable state and local law and is not directly regulated by the federal human subject regulations.

Research is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as "a systematic investigation designed to develop and contribute to generalizable knowledge."

Examples of activities that constitute research include:

- Any study intended to result in publication or public presentation;

- Any activity resulting in publication or public presentation, even though it involves only review of existing data that was collected with no intent to publish; or

- Any use of an investigational drug or device.

Thus, research with human subjects *includes survey and interview research*, as well as evaluation studies.

An example of an activity that is not research would be any evaluation of an employee, course, program, or service in which such evaluation is not designed to lead to generalizable knowledge. If an activity does not involve research, it does not require approval or review by the IRB. If the investigator has any doubt as to whether an activity constitutes research, he or she should contact the IRB Human Protections Administrator.

For all research activity, the investigator--whether an administrator, faculty member, staff member, or student--must file a protocol, or description of the procedure(s) to be used to gather information from subjects, with the IRB. The IRB must then approve the protocol prior to the collection of any data or research information from the research participants.

The guidelines have provisions for exemption of some studies that involve no risk to subjects and for expedited review for some types of studies involving no more than minimal risk to subjects. The determination of the type of review required must (by federal mandate) be made by the Institutional Review Board.

Those planning to conduct any type of research with humans, including survey or interview research or evaluation studies, should complete well in advance of data collection the *Application for Approval of Investigations Involving the Use of Human Subjects*, available in the Office of Sponsored Programs. An IRB Information Packet -- including a description of the review process, criteria for determining and expedited or exempt review and guidelines for writing a protocol and an informed consent document must be completed in accordance with IRB guidelines. It must be submitted online through IRBNet.org.

It is important to note that all investigators involved in the research are required to complete CITI training on the ethical conduct of research through

For further information, you can view the online IRB Information Packet.

Legal Charges or Conviction of a Misdemeanor or Felony

Students in the MSW Program who have been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony should be aware of the following:

1) A number of agencies/organizations that provide field practicum placements for social work students require a criminal background check, as well as a child/adult protective service check, prior to agreeing to provide field education.
2) Some state licensure social work boards inquire about whether the applicant has been charged with or convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony prior to allowing the applicant to sit for the licensure exam.

The Department requires that any field applicants or students in this situation consult the MSW Field Director prior to enrollment. Students who incur charges or convictions after admission must discuss the charges or convictions with an advisor, the MSW Program Director, and the MSW Field Director within two weeks of the occurrence. Failure to formally notify the advisor and the MSW Program Director within two weeks of a new charge may result in dismissal from the MSW program.

MSW Calendar

As the MSW program has limited face-to-face and/or online class meetings, the MSW Program does not strictly follow the WKU academic calendar. Typically, spring and fall break are not recognized in the MSW Program. It is best for students to check Topnet and class Syllabi to ensure that they understand the dates and times for class meetings in both the face-to-face and online environments. Absences in either environment will be handled in accordance with the stated attendance policy included in each class syllabus.

Non-Degree Seeking Student Status

Non-degree seeking students may enroll in social work courses with the exception of practice and field courses. The primary purpose of this status is for continuing education or for students who are interested in obtaining a clearer understanding of the major. Up to 9 hours may be accepted toward the degree if a student is later accepted in the graduate program. Non-degree seeking students must obtain written permission from the professor of the course to enroll in courses. Non-degree seeking status does not constitute acceptance into the graduate program, even if the student excels in the course work. Students must still apply for the graduate program by completing the admissions process. Successful completion of these courses may be considered in the evaluation of applicants for the graduate program.

Plagiarism and Falsification of Data

Plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and cheating are prohibited.   To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. The academic work of students must be their own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. Taking content directly from a source without giving credit or using a passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is plagiarism. This information is stressed in WKU's Student Handbook as Academic Dishonesty. Such a breach of policy will result in automatic failure of the class *and* possible expulsion from the program. Academic dishonesty is prohibited by the *MSW Handbook, the University Code of Student Conduct* and is also counter to social work values and ethics included in the *NASW Code of Ethics*. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and ethical guidelines and to follow them at all times. Any instances of academic dishonesty such as theft or sale of tests, electronic transmission of a test, test sharing, cheating, or plagiarism will mean a grade of "zero" for the assignment and/or course failure. These types of activities may be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary sanctions such as those listed above.

Practice Readiness Exam (PRE) Policy

Students are required to successfully complete a comprehensive examination called the Practice Readiness Exam (PRE) during the final semester as a requirement for the MSW degree. This exam will provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate competency in essential content areas of social work practice with an emphasis in rural settings. The content of the exam will include allowing the student to show competency in the following areas: human development and behavior in the social environment; cultural competencies; assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning; direct practice; communication; social worker/client relationship; social work values and ethics; supervision and administration; practice evaluation and research; social work policy, and rural social work practice.
The purpose of the PRE exam is:
1) to examine students' areas of strength and opportunities for growth related to master's level content and for 2) WKU MSW program evaluation. After the completion of the exam, the following will occur: 1. An item analysis will be conducted and each student's individual areas for improvement based on their PRE exam will be targeted during a

session between the student and their advisor. An advisor will meet with each student to support them in preparation for the state ASWB exam and licensure after graduation. 2. Students will then be required to create a plan of action related to their identified areas of improvement

 If a student has a disability, appropriate accommodations will be made in accordance with university policy. The student must provide documentation from the Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC) to the PRE Chair. The PRE Chair and the student will make a plan for appropriate accommodations. The PRE Chair will notify the MSW Program Director.
A student who fails to successfully complete the comprehensive exam may be dismissed from the MSW Program as this is aligned with the Graduate School Policy.

Maintaining Matriculation.

If the PRE exam is not completed during the initial period of registration for credit, the student must maintain matriculation by enrolling in a minimum of (1) credit hour of a 600 Maintaining Matriculation Course during the term in which the PRE is taken. Enrollment in matriculation courses does not result in a grade or credit toward any degree or non-degree program.

Professional Concerns

Students are expected to practice in an ethical manner while in the classroom or completing course assignments, and in field, in accordance with the MSW Student Handbook, WKU Student Code of Conduct and the *NASW Code of Ethics*. The *NASW Code of Ethics* a guiding framework and source for identifying professional performance. Behaviors especially under consideration are those related to professional practice, mental illness and/or substance use, illegal activity and classroom behavior. Concerns in any of these four circumstances will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form (Appendix F) and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review. Students are expected to understand the policy found below.

Four categories of behaviors warrant consideration of dismissal from the program:

1. **Professional Practice:** Any violation of the NASW code of ethics may be grounds for dismissal. Determining whether the violations of an ethical standard is sufficiently serious to warrant dismissal from the program should be based on the nature of the violation, the circumstances surrounding the violation, and the degree to which the violation is part of a pattern of behavior.
2. **Mental illness/substance abuse:** This category considers impairment as a result of mental illness and substance abuse. While mental illness itself does not constitute a basis for dismissal, of concern is the effect of the symptoms on the students' ability to perform in class and field. Consideration will be given to the students' involvement in remedial intervention. Rarely, there are also some conditions that may warrant probation or termination from the program if the student cannot perform

competently and in a professional manner.

3. **Illegal activity**: Violation of the law, outside a professional social work role, is considered to be serious behavior that may tarnish students' professional image and impair their effectiveness. A felony conviction may also prevent students from acquiring a license to practice social work. The nature of the criminal activity may also violate the values of the profession. The circumstances surrounding students' convictions of crimes will be reviewed on an individual basis with consideration given to an evaluation of whether the criminal activity transgresses the professional values of social work and compromises the students' ability for future professional conduct.

4. **Classroom behavior:** This category covers behavior by students that undermines the work of faculty, students and staff employed by or in any other way connected with the University and/or the fieldwork agency. Of concern is the nature of the disruptive behavior and the degree to which the behavior is an impediment to learning or assisting client systems. The severity and history of the behavior will be major factors considered in students' dismissal.

The program has the following termination for professional reason protocol in place. The student will be supported throughout this process by their Faculty Advisor or another selected faculty member. The Advisor will be responsible for guiding the student through the professional concern process, helping the student determine the relevant information to provide regarding the concern and providing other support as needed. The protocol is as follows.

Step 1: Any faculty may initiate a mandatory advising meeting with a student and their advisor by completing the Professional Concerns Form (Appendix F).

Step 2: The Professional Concerns Form will be submitted to both the MSW Program Director and the student's Academic Advisor. If the concern regards behavior in the field program, the field director will also be copied. A copy of the Professional Concerns Form will be placed in the student record.

Step 3: The Faculty Advisor will meet with the identified Student within 10 business days to review the stated concerns and respond in writing within 10 business days after reviewing the stated concerns. The student receives a copy of the Professional Concerns form at the meeting with the Advisor.

Step 4: After meeting with the Student, the Advisor submits a written recommendation to the MSW Program Director and a copy to the student. The recommendation may have the following outcomes: (1) a plan of action in the form of a Student Success Plan, (2) a referral to the Ad Hoc Committee for further review or (3) a referral to initiate the termination process.

Regarding Action 1, the plan is written jointly by the Advisor and the student. The Advisor may consult with the MSW Program Director and/or the MSW

Program Committee for assistance prior to recommending an action. For Action 2, referral to the Ad Hoc Committee, a committee consisting of at least 3 social work faculty members will be convened by the MSW Program Director within 10 days of receiving the Advisor decision. The committee will vote on 1 of 4 actions: (1) Continue in the Program/No Action taken, (2) Student Withdrawal from the MSW Program, (3) Student Termination from the MSW Program, or (4) Refer to Program Director in the event of a tie vote. For a Professional Concerns termination (#3), see Step 5: Professional Concerns Termination.

Step 5:
Professional Concerns Termination.

In the event that Professional Concerns Termination is being considered at any time throughout the process, the following steps will occur:

1. Formal allegations will be presented to the MSW Program Director in writing. This documentation must include the Professional Concerns Form (See Appendix F) along with additional copies of all pertinent documentation concerning the issue(s) of focus (i.e. emails, notes, etc.). This may have already been provided earlier in the process.
2. The MSW Program Director, in consultation with the student's Advisor, will re-examine the situation and determine if dismissal from the MSW Program is the appropriate course of action. If they determine that the situation can be handled informally, the advisor will meet individually with the student to develop a Student Success Plan within two weeks of the consultation with the MSW Program Director, however, if they decide that grounds for termination exist, the procedure continues as described below.
3. The MSW Program Director will meet with the student within 10 business days to discuss the concerns noted in the Professional Concerns Form. As well, the policy and procedure of termination will be reviewed with the student to insure the student understands both the process and his/her right to appeal. If the students fails to contact to schedule a meeting within two weeks, the decision for termination will stand.
4. The student will meet with an Ad Hoc Committee comprised of the MSW Program Director, and 5 or more social work faculty. The student may also invite a faculty member to serve as her or his advocate. This will usually be the advisor, but the student may choose the advisor, or another faculty member. No outside personnel may attend the ad hoc committee meeting.

    A committee chair will be elected from those present. The committee chair will be responsible for running the meeting in an efficient and fair manner. Ad Hoc committee members will review the student file including: all formal documentation of the professional concern prior to the meeting. The meeting will follow the brief agenda described here:

A. In a closed session with all Ad Hoc committee members, a brief overview of the concerns will be presented by the program director (or their appointed designee) before the student enters the meeting.

B. The student will be given ample time to explain their view of the professional concern. Students are expected to provide written documentation of their perspective including letters of support, documentation of extenuating circumstances, event timelines, and any other documentation that would be helpful to the committee.

C. Ad Hoc committee members will then ask the student clarifying questions.

D. Following this, the chair will explain potential Ad Hoc committee decisions to the student of concern. The student will then be dismissed.

E. In a closed session with all Ad Hoc committee members, the faculty majority will determine the outcome for the student. In the event of a tie, the program director will cast a tie breaking vote.

5. The MSW Program Director will communicate the outcome in writing to the student within 2 business days. A copy will be placed in the student's permanent file. The Social Work Department Chair will be notified of this decision at this time.
6. The student has ten business days following the written notification in which to appeal to the Department Head. (See **University-Wide Grievance Policy**)
7. If there is no written request from the student within ten business days, the MSW Program Director will notify Graduate Studies of the dismissal and copy this to the Department Head.

NOTE: If the student is not in agreement with the actions of the MSW Program Director, the Advisor, or the MSW Ad Hoc Committee, the student may elect to inform the Department Chair in writing of their concern and request the Department Head oversee the process. The student will have the opportunity to appeal to the Graduate School after Step 7.

Readmission Policy

A graduate application is active for one year. Students in good standing who do not enroll in three terms after the initial admission term will be required to reapply to the Graduate School and the MSW Program. Readmission can only be considered if the student will complete all requirements for the MSW degree within six years from the initial enrollment date. Candidates for readmission should contact the social work office

for advising. (See **Withdrawal from the University**)

Student Organizations

Graduate Student Social Work organization (GSSW)

The Department of Social Work actively encourages students in the MSW program to organize, including the creation of its own constitution and governing body. The MSW student organization should serve for the betterment, education, and representation of themselves while gaining practical experience and providing service to the community. Membership in the MSW student organization offers the opportunity to enhance student careers through peer recognition, networking, and service. The MSW student organization is committed to conducting itself in accordance with the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics. The inaugural student organization for the graduate program was formed during the academic year 2003-2004. Any student enrolled in a graduate level social work course may join the organization. There are annual dues for membership. The student organization has a virtual meeting space.
Please contact the MSW office for more information.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers in the world. NASW serves over 155,000 social workers in 55 chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and abroad. Founded in 1955, the NASW is the most recognized membership organization of professional social workers in the world. The Association promotes, develops and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities through its work and advocacy.

MSW students are expected to join NASW and participate in their local branch meetings and programs. Membership will serve to enhance understanding of the profession as well as strengthen socialization into the profession. NASW is a rich resource for students, making available to them web site information on scholarships, news, student liability insurance, and policies of the profession. The numerous books and journals available through the association can serve as invaluable reference material for student projects and papers.

Phi Alpha

Phi Alpha is a national honor society for social work students. The purposes of Phi Alpha Honor Society are to provide a closer bond among students of social work and promote humanitarian goals and ideals. Phi Alpha fosters high standards of education for social workers and invites into membership those who have attained excellence in scholarship and achievement in social work. The Delta Mu Chapter

of Phi Alpha Honor Society was established at Western Kentucky University in 1994.

A graduate student is eligible for membership after achieving the following national and local chapter requirements:

    a. Completed 9 semester hours of graduate social work courses
    b. Achieved a minimum grade point average of 3.7
    c. Character consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

There is an initiation fee of $40, which covers the lifetime membership dues.

Thesis Option

Students may elect to conduct research and write a thesis. This does not replace any requirement for the MSW Program. See Appendix D for information and application.

Transfer Credits

The transfer of credits from an accredited institution toward the MSW requirements will be examined on a case-by-case basis. If transfer is granted by the program, all University requirements for transferring credits must be met. Students transferring from CSWE Accredited MSW Programs must complete the entire application process, including all application materials. Students transferring from a CSWE accredited MSW program must have a 3.0 GPA and be in good standing with the originating school. Transfer students are required to meet with the MSW Program Director to determine their transfer credit status. All transfer credits must be earned within six years of graduation from the WKU MSW Program.

Waiving Courses

Students who have completed accredited social work courses with a grade of B or better can apply to have a MSW course waived if they believe it is material that has been covered in the BSW course. Only SWRK 510, SWRK 530, and SWRK 540 are eligible to be waived from the foundation year. Potential students are asked to submit all materials for waiver requests by **April 1.**

The waiver process consists of the following steps: a) the student submits in writing a request to waive a specific foundation course and attaches the course syllabus and proof of grade to the MSW Program Director; b) the Director reviews the materials for comparability of content with the specific MSW foundation course; c) If the MSW Program Director determines that the course material is equivalent, the student is exempted from the class in the foundation curriculum and replaces those credits with social work elective credits; d) this determination is communicated to the student and a copy of the Director's determination filed in the student's MSW file. The Graduate Studies Program of Study Form is modified to show the change of this course substitution.

If a waiver is granted the student must select an elective course for each waiver approved. A waiver does not change the total number of hours needed to graduate. In order for a waiver to be considered, the student must have completed the course within the past 6 years and earned a grade of B or better.

Withdrawal from the University/Readmission

For various reasons it is occasionally necessary for a student to withdraw from the University. Prior to the midpoint of the semester, students may use TopNet to withdraw. After the midpoint of the semester, the student should report to the Office of the Registrar to initiate withdrawal procedures. Students leaving the institution without an official withdrawal will receive failing grades in all courses in which they are enrolled and endanger their future status in the institution. Students withdrawing after the midpoint of the semester, a bi-term or comparable period during a summer session must consult with their instructors as to the withdrawal grade. The official date of the withdrawal is the date the withdrawal is processed on TopNet or the written notice is received in the Office of the Registrar. Students wishing to return to WKU at a later date must submit an application for readmission prior to the deadline for submitting applications.

In special circumstances, as described below, a complete withdrawal from the University after the midpoint of a term will be considered. Withdrawal Request forms are available online through the Office of the Registrar. Students seeking readmission should contact the MSW Program Director as well as the Department of Graduate Studies. To withdrawal in good standing, a student must submit written notification to the Advisor and the MSW Program Director. The MSW Program Director will notify graduate studies of the request for withdrawal.

A student considering to either audit or withdraw from a course should consult with course faculty, their faculty advisor, and the WKU Student Financial Assistance office prior to making their decision. It is the student's responsibility to determine how such action would affect their financial standing (grant/scholarship/loan/etc.) and admission eligibility with the university.

WKU Facilities

Computing Facilities

There are computer labs available to students at WKU. They are at the following locations: Jody Richards Hall, South Campus (C223), Grise Hall (GH 239), Student Technology Center of the Helm Library, Snell Hall (SH 1104), Cherry Hall (Rm. 127), and Cravens Common.

Libraries

WKU Libraries offers on-site and remote services at the Helm-Cravens Library and the Commons at Helm Library. Also on the Main Campus are two specialized collections: the Educational Resources Center (ERC), and Special Collections in the Kentucky Building. Library hours of operation can be found on the library website. Library hours are modified for summer, holidays, and breaks. WKU Libraries has approximately 800,000 cataloged volumes and 3,800 serials subscriptions. WKU Libraries' offers a one-stop shop for finding WKU Libraries print and online books, print and online journals, audiovisuals, and many journal articles.

Increasingly, WKU Libraries' resources are available in online full-text. Online resources include electronic books and journals and approximately 200 online databases. An online Social Work Research Guide is updated weekly. Subscription-only online resources may be accessed on or off campus with a WKU NetID and password. A growing number of books are available online for the convenience of off-campus users.

WKU's Databases allow on- and off-campus users to retrieve full-text articles by subject. Some examples are Encyclopedia of Social Work , DSM-5 , EBSCOhost , Social Services Abstracts , and Google Scholar.

Research assistance is provided. The Social Work program, along with other CHHS programs, is served by a full-time Health Sciences Librarian. Articles and books held by WKU Libraries are delivered to faculty offices upon request. Extended Library Services assists students enrolled in online classes. Interlibrary Loans can obtain most books and articles (except for textbooks) not held by WKU Libraries at no cost to WKU-affiliated users. The average turnaround time for electronic delivery of article requests is less than two days.

The Writing Center is located in Cherry Hall or Cravens or offers online support via Zoom or email. They offer individual conferences about writing with staff. Services are free to WKU students.

The Information Technology Services offers technology support in a variety of options for your convenience.

WKU Policies and Procedures

WKU FERPA Policy

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 afford certain rights to students concerning their education records. FERPA provides the right to inspect and review education records, the right to seek to amend those records, and the right to limit disclosure of information from the records (Office of the Registrar). Furthermore, per FERPA, students have the right to a copy of their record "when failure to provide a copy of the record would effectively prevent the student from inspecting and reviewing the record, such as when the student no longer lives within commuting distance. A copy may be refused, but only if, in doing so, the institution does not limit the student's right to inspect and review that record." (AACRAO 2012 FERPA Guide).

The MSW Program has the following guidelines for review of the academic record: 1) the student requests access to record via written documentation, 2) the MSW Program Director arranges for a day/time with the student to review the academic record, 3) the student can inspect their record face to face. If the student is unable to view the record face to face due to extenuating circumstances, the MSW Program Director will work with the student to provide access to the record.

Statement of Compliance

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to equal opportunity in its educational programs and employment. The University is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, veteran status, or marital status. On request, WKU will provide reasonable accommodations, including auxiliary aids and services, necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in all services, programs, activities, and employment.

The University has published policies and procedures for investigating and/or addressing discrimination or harassment in its educational programs and/or employment. If you believe you have experienced discrimination or harassment in such programs, activities, or employment, policies and procedures are included on the following website: WKU Policies, in addition to the WKU Student Handbook, and Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. These publications, including information about University procedures, are available on the University's website (www.wku.edu), at: WKU Statement of Non-Discrimination

Title IX is a federal law established to protect victims of gender discrimination and sexual harassment. This law creates obligations for the University to investigate and provide prompt and effective remedies when notified about assault or harassment. If you feel that you have been a victim of gender discrimination or sexual harassment, you are encouraged to contact a faculty member or the University's Title IX Coordinator. The following person has been designated to serve as the University's Title IX Coordinators: Ms. Deborah Wilkins, Mr. Michael Crowe, and/or Mr. Joshua Hayes.

Information regarding WKU's Title IX compliance, policies, and procedures

Office of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action/University ADA Services
Wetherby Administration Building G33
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11009
Bowling Green, KY 42101-11009
(270) 745-5121

Department of Human Resources
Wetherby Administration Building G25
1906 College Heights Blvd. Bowling
Green, KY 42101-11003 (270) 745-
5360

Academic Affairs and Office of the Provost
Wetherby Administration Building 239
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11008
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1008
(270) 745-2297

Inquiries about alleged discrimination may also be made directly to:

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
The Wanamaker Building Suite 515
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 656-8548

Kentucky Commission on Human Rights
832 Capital Plaza
500 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 60601
(800) 292-5566 or (502) 595-4084

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
600 Martin Luther King Jr. Place, Suite 268
Louisville, KY 40202
(800) 669-4000 or TTY (800) 669-6820

University-Wide Grievance Policies and Procedures

Student Complaint Regarding Faculty Decisions

Students who have a complaint concerning a faculty member (grade disagreement, improper application of policy, etc.) must follow the Graduate School Student Complaint Procedure for grievances. Students should note that the MSW program has a Director and that consultation with the MSW Program Director should occur after consultation with the faculty member and before consultation with the Department Chair. Questions about the complaint procedure should be directed to the [Student Ombuds Officer](#) at (270) 745-2683 or [student.ombudsman@wku.edu](#).

 More information can be found at [A Guide to Student Complaints at WKU](#).
The student complaint procedure for resolving a complaint concerning a faculty member can be found in the [Student Academic and Grade Complaint Procedure](#) and is outlined below:

Step 1A (Faculty Member)

The first step is for the student to discuss the complaint with the faculty member involved. If the University no longer employs the faculty member, the student should go directly to the department head that will contact and represent the former faculty member. If the complaint involves a grade, the student must take the complaint to the faculty member within the first two weeks of the first regular semester (fall, spring) following the assignment of the grade. It is hoped that the complaint may be satisfactorily dealt with at this level.

Step 1B (MSW Program Director)

An additional step in the MSW Program requires a meeting with the MSW Program Director. If the student does not receive satisfactory resolution with the faculty member regarding the complaint, the MSW Program director will meet with the Faculty Member and the MSW Program Director to attempt resolution. This meeting will occur within 2 weeks of the meeting with the Faculty Member alone. If the complaint is not resolved, the process moves to step 2.

Step 2 (Department Level)

If the student and the faculty member are unable to resolve the complaint, the student may take the complaint to the faculty member's department head. Written notification of the complaint must be given to the department head within two weeks after the meeting with the faculty member. It is the responsibility of the department head to arrange for a conference where the student, faculty member and the department head will be present for discussion. Neither the faculty member nor the student will be allowed representation at the conference. The department head shall hear both sides of the complaint and shall attempt to mediate a settlement. The department head shall keep a written record of the proceedings, including the recommended solution. The department head's recommended solution is to be considered by both the faculty

member and the student as a recommendation and not as a decision that is binding.

Step 3 (College Level)

Should the student be unable to receive the satisfaction desired at the departmental level, the complaint may be taken to the college level. Written notification of the complaint must be submitted to the college dean or his/her designated representative within two weeks after the conference with the department head (Step 2). Upon receipt of the notification, the college dean or his representative shall provide the student a copy of the procedural guidelines to be followed by the College Complaint Committee. The procedural guidelines shall provide for a conference with both the student and the faculty member present for joint discussion of the complaint with the committee.

The College Complaint Committee will be responsible for scheduling the conference within two weeks following the submission of a written complaint to the chairman of the College Complaint Committee including as much detail as the student cares to include. The written complaint should clearly state what is considered to be unreasonable and/or unfair practices or procedures. Neither the faculty member nor the student will be allowed representation at the conference. The College Complaint Committee shall hear

both sides of the complaint and render a decision. The copy being sent as a matter of record to the student, faculty member, faculty member's department head and the faculty member's college dean. The Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs shall be responsible for enforcing the decision of the college committee. The Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs shall not enforce the decision until two weeks after the college committee makes the decision. The purpose of the two-week delay is to provide either the student or the faculty member an opportunity to submit a formal written notice of appeal to the University Complaint Committee.

Step 4 (University Level)

Should the student or the faculty member desire to appeal the decision of the College Complaint Committee, a formal written notice of appeal may be submitted to the University Complaint Committee chair, with a copy to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, within two weeks of the decision of the College Complaint Committee. The chair of the University Complaint Committee will provide the student and the faculty member involved with a copy of the University Complaint Committee's Procedural Guidelines. The University Complaint Committee will secure copies of the written proceedings from the department head and the College Complaint Committee. The University Complaint Committee will schedule a conference where the faculty member and the student jointly discuss the issue. Neither the faculty member nor the student will be allowed representation at the conference. The committee's decision will be sent to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, with a copy being sent as a matter of record to the student, faculty member, faculty member's department head and the faculty member's college dean. The Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs will see that decisions of the University Complaint Committee are carried out. The University Complaint Committee's decision is final.

Important Complaint Exceptions

- Student Disability regarding denial of accommodations, report to Student ADA Compliance Officer and follow WKU policy #6.1010

- Discrimination and Harassment concerns, see below reporting process and follow WKU policy #0.2040 and #0.2070
    - Discrimination is always reported to the Office of Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO)
    - Student-to-student harassment is reported to Office of Judicial Affairs (OJA) or the WKU Title IX Coordinator
    - Student-to-faculty/employee harassment is reported to the Office of Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO)

Please see the Graduate Catalog **Policy on Judicial Affairs** for further information.

[WKU Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy](#)

The following sanctions comprise the range of official University actions, which may be taken as the result of any disciplinary problem. Sanctions may be imposed only after a conference or hearing at which the student has had the opportunity to be heard. Disciplinary actions are listed below which may be taken against students whose behavior or acts violate University regulations. Sanctions may be used independently or in combination depending on the particular circumstance of the violation. Chronic and/or multiple violations during the course of an individual student's college career may increase the severity of sanctions applied.

   1. **Warning and/or Reprimand** - Official notice to a student that conduct or actions are in violation. The continuation of such conduct or actions may result in further disciplinary action.

   2. **Creative Discipline** - A sanction, which may be used in lieu of, or in combination with, sanctions numbered three through six below. Creative discipline will be consistent with the offense committed. In some cases, at the discretion of the hearing officer, a student found in violation may attend special educational seminars, classes, or workshops offered in the subject area of the violation or be sanctioned in another way which is directly related to the violation. In these cases, the student must always submit written proof of completion of the sanction to the hearing officer. The University may also contact parents or legal guardians of students found in violation of policy concerning the possession of alcohol or controlled substances if the student is under 21.

   3. **Disciplinary Agreement** - Behavior contract between the University and the student whereby the student agrees, in writing, to correct inappropriate behaviors.

   4. **Restricted Use of Facilities** - Denial of on-campus use of an automobile for a specified period of time, removal from a living group, or other privilege including the use of specific University facilities, consistent with the offense committed. Restricted use of facilities may be accompanied by other sanctions.

   5. **Restitution** - Reimbursement by transfer of property or service to the University or a member of the University community in an amount not in excess of the damage or loss incurred. Reimbursement may be accompanied by other sanctions.

   6. **Restricted University Participation** - Exclusion for a period of time from participating in extra-curricular activities including recognized student organizations and/or representing the University in any manner. Classroom attendance will be unaffected.

   7. **Disciplinary Probation** - A period of observation and review of conduct in which the student demonstrates compliance with the provisions of University regulations.

8. **Suspension** - Exclusion for a period of time, generally from one term to one year.

9. **Deferred Suspension** - Exclusion for a period of time, generally from one term to one year, but a term beyond the current term in which the incident occurs.

10. **Probated Suspension** - Exclusion for a period of time but exclusion being set aside due to mitigating circumstances.

11. **Expulsion** - Dismissal from the University for an indefinite period of time. Any student expelled may not, thereafter, be readmitted to the University except upon application to the Board of Regents through the President.

APPENDIX A: *NASW CODE OF ETHICS*

Students admitted into the social work program are required to sign the Western Kentucky University Department of Social Work Code of Ethics Agreement Statement indicating their agreement to practice by these standards. Any violation of the principles contained with the NASW Code of Ethics can result in dismissal from the program. The WKU program places special emphasis on social work values and ethics.

The Code of Ethics standards indicate that six areas of ethical obligation for social workers: (1) social workers' ethical responsibilities to clients, (2) social workers' ethical responsibilities to colleagues, (3) social workers' ethical responsibilities in practice settings, (4) social workers' ethical responsibilities as professionals, (5) social workers' ethical responsibilities to the social work profession, and (6) social workers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society.

These ethical obligations are based on the values and principles discussed below (NASW, 2021). These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

Value: *Service*
Ethical Principle: *Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.*
Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return (pro bono service).

Value: *Social Justice*
Ethical Principle: *Social workers challenge social injustice.*
Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

Value: *Dignity and Worth of the Person*
Ethical Principle: *Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.*
Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of

their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients' interests and the broader society's interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.

Value: *Importance of Human Relationships*
Ethical Principle: *Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.*
Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

Value: *Integrity*
Ethical Principle: *Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.*
Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

Value: *Competence*
Ethical Principle: *Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.*
Social workers continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledgebase of the profession.

APPENDIX B: Department Code of Ethics Agreement

Western Kentucky University
Department of Social Work
Code of Ethics Agreement Statement

The NASW Code of Ethics will be the guiding framework and source for identifying professional performance. The program requires that all students sign a statement of adherence to the Code of Ethics. Once you have accessed the NASW homepage, click on the Code of Ethics link and read the complete document.

Please initial and date the following statements:

_____ I understand it is my responsibility to read the NASW Code of Ethics.

_____ I agree with, support, and commit myself to uphold the principles contained within the NASW Code of Ethics.

_____ I understand that any violation of the principles contained with the NASW Code of Ethics can result in my dismissal from the program.

_____
Print Full Name (Printed)

_____
Signature   Date

****

MSW STUDENT HANDBOOK POLICY STATEMENT

The following policy statement is to be signed and returned at the conclusion of MSW Orientation.

1. I agree to read the MSW Handbook located on the Department of Social Work website.
2. I agree to abide by all policies and regulations stipulated in the MSW Handbook.

_____
Student Name (Printed)

_____
Student Signature   Date

Professionalism:

[The NASW Code of Ethics](#) is a guiding framework and source for identifying professional performance. Students are expected to practice in an ethical manner while in the classroom or completing assignments pertaining to this course in accordance with the MSW Student Handbook, WKU Student Code of Conduct and the NASW Code of Ethics Behaviors especially under consideration are those related to professional practice, mental illness and/or substance use, illegal activity and classroom behavior. Concerns in any of these four circumstances will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review. Students are expected to understand the policy, in its entirety, found in the MSW Student Handbook.

_____ I understand that I must abide by the professional performance guidelines as stipulated in the MSW Student Handbook and WKU Student Code of Conduct.

Print Full Name: _____

Signature:_____Date:_____

APPENDIX C: MSW Curriculum Philosophy

The faculty at Western Kentucky University perceives the foundation of advanced direct practice in rural settings as generalist practice that includes an integration of skills, knowledge, and values across multiple systems levels. Foundation practice integrates a cultural competency perspective including a basic understanding of "rurality" (rurality is defined as the common thread that links rural areas, producing a unique culture). The profession's values, principles, practice methods, and interventions are applied across systems levels. The MSW program is particularly dedicated to promoting knowledge and skills in cultural competence, clinical intervention and assessment, rural communities, macro theory, and service delivery within the rural environment that is responsive to the cultural context.

The Generalist Foundation

The faculty identified the generalist perspective as the framework for the foundation year of the MSW program. Social workers in rural areas need to have a broad foundation of knowledge and skills in order to function as competent direct practitioners in rural areas. The generalist perspective is grounded in social work values and principles with an eclectic knowledge base and skills set that allow practitioners to function effectively at the beginning level of social work practice. Generalist practitioners provide services at multiple levels with multiple systems at the same time. Multi-tasking is an essential component of social work practice. A generalist social worker practices with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities connecting them with specific tangible services.

There are multiple values that are essential in defining social work practice. Every individual has inherent value, integrity, and worth. The importance of human relationships is central to direct practice. Social work practitioners focus on competent service and practice. Their practice is guided by a desire to provide services and pursue economic and social justice. Mutual responsibility is also a central value of the social work profession. Each member of a system is interlinked.

Generalist level social workers are competent to identify and assess situations between individuals and social institutions. They review agency policies and procedures as well as assessing client systems. They work collaboratively with other social workers and agencies. Generalist social workers enhance the problem solving and coping skills of clients. The problem-solving skills are essential to the generalist level practitioner. The ability to identify, assess, plan, intervene, evaluate and terminate social services across levels is critical for effective practice. Generalist level social workers develop and implement a plan for improving the well-being of client systems based on problem and strength assessment as well as the exploration of obtainable goals and available options. They intervene on behalf of vulnerable and discriminated populations. Generalist level practitioners are lifelong learners. They continually seek opportunities to

evaluate and develop their practice.

Generalist level social workers possess a variety of skills. Case management is a core skill that is performed at the foundation level of practice. Social workers must be able to complete both a psychosocial history and assessment. They demonstrate basic advocacy and problem-solving skills. Basic group facilitation skills are central. These skills include the ability to facilitate psycho-educational groups, social skills groups, and task groups. They demonstrate effective communication skills, including active listening skills. Verbal communication is clear and concise. Social workers understand the nature of nonverbal behaviors. They listen to both the manifest and latent content of what others are saying. Social workers express ideas clearly using the written word. Competent foundation practice includes the ability to respond to systems in a manner that is helpful and appropriate. They manage the use of technology such as computers, interactive television, and web-based opportunities, which can be helpful at multiple levels of social service intervention.

Generalist social workers are able to think critically. They assist clients to make sense of conflicting and confusing situations. They are able to sort relevant information in a clear way in order to assist individuals in solving problems or dealing with crises and losses in their lives. They understand how social institutions affect the person and how the individual affects the social institution. Their assessment is based upon sound analytic skills.

The social work practitioner performs a variety of social work roles, including but not limited to the following:
- The enabler facilitates the client's accomplishment of a defined change, including altering the environment.
- The consultant role is based on a planned interaction to reconcile problems.
- The collaborator exchanges information, which results in a joint problem-solving activity.
- The teacher provides new information necessary for managing and coping with the current situation.
- The mediator acts as a go between for two systems.
- The advocate speaks for the client.
- The broker links clients to existing resources.

Generalist social work practice utilizes a wide range of knowledge. Social workers have a basic understanding of the person in environment perspective. The environment is a complex whole consisting of a continuous, interlocking context. There is a mutual interdependence between person, behavior, and environment. Foundation practice recognizes the individual as a complex social, biological, spiritual, and psychological being. General systems theory drives the social work practice knowledge base. Generalist social work practitioners understand the policies, which influence social work practice as well as the historical context of practice, policy, oppression, social services, and poverty. They possess knowledge of human development and behavior as it

interacts with social, political, economic, and cultural institutions. They identify and define basic ethical conflicts and dilemmas.

Generalist practitioners possess a multitude of traits, including but not limited to the following:

- Flexibility
- Critical thinking
- Reliability
- Ability to start where the client is
- Ethical thinking and behavior
- Passion for justice
- Assertiveness
- Warmth and genuineness
- Respect
- Caring
- Self-awareness
- Integrity
- Open-mindedness
- Nonjudgmental

The faculty determined that an understanding of rurality was also important for generalist level social work practice. Rural areas are unique and similar. While this may seem a contradiction, the common thread of rural areas produces a unique culture. The faculty recognizes that all rural areas are the same. It is understood that individual rural areas have diverse populations given their location. Issues of ethnicity, religion, gender, age and socio-economic variables influence the manifestation of rurality in each of these locations. Rural areas are experiencing transitional change regardless of their physical location. The program will explore both the uniqueness and the commonalities of rural areas in the curriculum.

In rural areas, social problems, which may seem common across geography, take on special parameters. Geography creates social and economic problems due to physical and social isolation. Transportation in rural areas tends to be privately owned vehicles, which is by far the most expensive form of transportation considering the cost of maintenance and insurance. Rural areas tend to have persistent intergenerational poverty. Rural areas tend to be "close knit." Individuals in rural communities often resent outside experts advising them on how to address problems. Rural communities have a strong sense of "family" including extended family. Who one is related to often determines one's ability to function within the community. Thus, social systems tend to be more informal than formal. They are more personalized. They tend to be characterized by personal caring and mutuality. Social closeness and reduced power differentials between helper and recipient are intrinsic to the social systems in rural areas. Rural areas are traditionally limited economically and are linked to the land. Agriculture and textile industries have provided the economic base in rural communities. This economic base has led to a strong sense of fatalism, "what will be, will be." Rural areas tend to lean toward greater conformity with conventional norms, virtues, and

prejudices.

Building upon the generalist foundation, the advanced direct practice in rural settings concentration, WKU utilize a variety of theories, skills, and knowledge. This practice is a multi-method practice across systems levels that allows for transdiscplinary practice. The theoretical underpinning rests on three components: systems theory, strengths perspective, and empowerment.

The social work faculty envisions rural practice as social work practice that allows the practitioner to function at multiple system levels with advanced knowledge about the rural culture and its dynamics. Advanced direct practice within in rural areas assumes that rural areas are markedly different from urban settings in a variety of ways. While the skills needed for advanced direct practice may be common across geographical location, it is the way that social workers practice that is different. Direct practitioners in rural environments face different tasks, client characteristics, and social issues compared to practitioners in urban environments. Rural practitioners enact social work roles in ways that are more diverse than urban social workers. For example, while social problems are common to all geographic regions, rural localities have special concerns in the areas of legislation and regulation regarding economic development, employment, health care, housing, landownership, transportation, and the diverse needs of families and children. Welfare recipients who are required to work may find employment in rural areas non-existent due to the limited economic opportunities in rural areas.

Advanced Generalist Practice Concentration

Advanced practice in a rural setting requires the professional use of self in an expanded variety of roles and responsibilities. The worker must possess a more developed professional self. They must possess a more robust toolbox of skills than the foundation provides. A deeper understanding of process across and within systems (individuals, family, group, agency, institution, communities, and societies) leads to an increased ability to influence these systems by the practitioner. They have a more developed sense of self in relationships, which is important due to the fluid boundaries often found in professional and personal relationships in rural areas.

Practitioners must have integrated knowledge and skills for social work in rural communities, which includes the ability to engage in transdisciplinary collaborations. They are skillful in working with a variety of helping agents (formal and informal), including and beyond professional social workers. They must be able to communicate and interact appropriately with people in the rural community to solve a wider range of problems. This requires an intrinsic knowledge of the culture and nature of rural communities.

Advanced direct social work practice in rural settings requires an eclectic knowledge base with a multi-dimensional framework of practice that is informed by historical, cultural, and social contexts. Practitioners must use a variety of theories and

perspectives in order to determine the best strategy and intervention for the client system. Direct practice in rural areas requires an extensive knowledge of practice theories and wisdom. Rural social workers must be able to provide direct counseling and casework services. Their ability to work with families as partners in the change process is essential as well as their ability to utilize knowledge of rurality, including the customs, traditions, heritage, and culture of rural people with whom they are working to provide culturally competent direct practice. Social workers employ a fully developed understanding of the interplay of diversity across systems.

They also need to have community development skills, including expertise in economic development and administrative ability. They must perform careful study and analysis in order to understand the community in which they practice. This requires an in-depth knowledge of community theories and intervention strategies. Critical thinking and analysis of these theories and strategies are also required in order to determine the appropriateness of generalist methods for the rural area. Specific community development strategies should be a part of the practitioner's toolbox. Rural communities have historically survived by forming collaborations with neighbors, relatives, and friends to help with farming chores, building, and childcare. Collaborating, networking, and partnering are key skills in advanced direct practice in rural settings.

Direct practice in the rural setting is based on an analytical and empirical understanding of competent practice that intervenes across multiple systems simultaneously. A thorough knowledge of practice evaluation, including single subject design and program evaluation is required. Practitioners have to be able to evaluate practice at multiple levels across multiple systems. They must also be critical consumers of the practice and research literature. Critical analysis of current practice and its effectiveness in rural areas is vital. Rural social work practitioners must demonstrate research competence, as well as skills as policy practitioners.

The practitioner must expand their understanding of social welfare policy beyond the "traditional" policies learned at the generalist level. Farm price support policies and agricultural extension programs are social welfare policies, which impact rural communities. Policies of deregulation of the transportation industry directly impact rural communities. Advanced direct practice in rural areas requires that the practitioner be able to identify, analyze, and impact gaps and strengths in government and non-government policies. Practice in rural areas involves being an active change agent. They develop and implement appropriate measures to enhance governmental representatives, policies, and procedures to be more responsive to rural communities. Legislative accountability is central to advanced social work practice in rural areas. Practitioners must influence the process of policy analysis and implement planned change within the political system at multiple levels of policymaking, including local (city or county), state, and federal levels.

Beyond carrying out a wider range of roles than beginning level social workers, direct practice social workers in rural areas have to identify and create new and different helping roles as they practice. The role of broker now goes beyond linking clients to

resources that exist; it focuses on innovatively identifying resources that are not readily available or beyond the "traditional" solution base. Transportation in rural areas will have to take into consideration the geographic challenges of dirt roads and distance from the small city. With the manager role, the advanced practitioner must design and deliver social work services, including planning, negotiation, implementing, and evaluating services with innovative thinking. Meeting the client where he or she is takes on a new meaning. Practitioners must be comfortable with a loss of anonymity (constant public persona) and be able to practice in non-traditional and informal ways. Practitioners must go beyond the identification and understanding of ethical conflicts and dilemmas; they must manage these conflicts. For example, confidentially in rural areas is almost non-existent with the rural culture. Everyone knows everyone. Thus, the practitioner must manage the dilemma of protecting client's identity when every one knows that they are working with the family. It is almost impossible to avoid dual relationships. A practitioner attends social functions, school activities, and other expected social interactions with family members of clients. Practitioners must manage these dual relationships in such a way that it provides maximum protection for one's clients. Social workers in rural areas must be able to perform the administrator role. Administration was identified by the faculty and Program Advisory Committee as an important aspect of direct practice in rural areas.

Practitioners should have a broad understanding of factors affecting rural communities, including environmental and socioeconomic conditions, behavior, health care, and mental health care. Advanced direct practitioners in rural settings must work from a strengths perspective to manage multi-system level challenges. This goal focused model centers on a client's perception of where to go with her or his life and empowerment. Advanced direct practice in rural areas includes the ability to provide clinical care as well as case management. This practice includes understanding clinical assessment, diagnosis, and intervention. Direct practice includes working effectively as team members and leaders in organized settings that emphasize high-quality, cost-effective, and integrated services. Leadership and management are key components of rural practice. Practitioners need to be able to transcend front line practice and administrative practice. Direct practice involves multiple systems in practice rather than myopically focusing on one level. Practitioners integrate knowledge, history, policy, and theory to develop competent independent practice interventions.

Competent practice includes information and resource management. Integration of skills and clinical judgment for independent practice becomes an essential component of advanced direct rural practice. Independent practice is necessary in rural areas where social service agencies and professionals have limited access to resources and other professionals. Competent practice means developing and maintaining informal relationships. Competent direct practice is intrinsically linked to competent cultural practice.

APPENDIX D: Thesis Option

A faculty member within the MSW program will be assigned as the Chair for the Research Sequence and Thesis Option. The Chair is responsible for the administration of the MSW Thesis Option. Duties of the sequence Chair in relation to the MSW thesis option include:

1. Administrating all aspects of the thesis option.
2. Further enhancement of the thesis option policies and procedures.
3. Ensuring compliance of University and Graduate School policies and requirements in relation to thesis option.

Thesis

The thesis is offered as an option to graduate students **in addition to** the required practice readiness examination. Each year, a limited number of students may be approved for pursuing this option. This option is suggested for students committed to developing a particular area of research interest and working independently under the guidance of a thesis committee. It builds on foundation level research skills.

Eligibility

In order to be considered for the thesis option, a student must meet the following criteria:

1. Have a minimum of 3.5 or above GPA in foundation social work courses for traditional students, or a minimum of 3.5 GPA in undergraduate social work courses for advanced standing students.
2. Earn an "A" in SWRK 540 for traditional students or in an approved undergraduate research course for the advanced standing students.
3. Insure adherence to IRB guidelines

Requirements

The thesis option constitutes nine (9) semester credit hours toward the MSW degree, which substitutes for SWRK 640 – Applied Social Work Research (3 credit hours) and other required elective credit hours. Students approved for the thesis option need to register for nine (9) hours of (SWRK 698 – 3 hours & SWRK 699 - 6 hours) during the final (concentration) year of course work.

Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee

Selection of thesis advisors and thesis committees must conform to University requirements. Discuss your research plans with a faculty member who can help you decide if the thesis option is a good choice for you during the spring semester of the foundation year. If you decide to pursue the thesis option, identify a faculty member who will serve as your thesis advisor/chair of your thesis committee. The thesis advisor/chair will guide you through the application, proposal development, and the research process. The thesis committee will consist of thesis advisor/chair and two

other faculty members. It is the responsibility of the student to enlist members for the thesis committee. Your thesis advisor may also be able to provide you with guidance and help in finding suitable committee members based on your research interest. Any change in the composition of the committee requires justification and must be approved by the Chair of Research Sequence and Thesis Option in the MSW program.

Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee Responsibilities

The primary responsibility for monitoring progress in thesis project rests with the thesis advisor. However, the thesis committee will engage in regular review of work throughout the period in which the student is enrolled in thesis credit. The thesis committee is responsible for approving the student's final proposal. Approval will be indicated on a form requiring the signature of all committee members. If the thesis committee does not approve the final proposal, they will indicate the specific changes required for approval. A report of these changes will be prepared by the thesis advisor/chair for delivery to and discussion with the student with a copy retained for MSW program files. The thesis committee must also approve the final thesis. Final thesis committee approval requires that each member sign the university signature page.

Procedures

1. Thesis Option Information Session: Information on the Thesis Option and this document will be shared during the Thesis Option Information Session to be offered in **March** for the traditional students. Students will be asked to indicate their intention by using the Thesis Option Intention Form.
2. Students must identify their thesis advisor and submit the Thesis Option Application Form before **April 15** for Traditional students.
3. Approval notice by the MSW Program Research Sequence and Thesis Option Chair by **May 1**.
4. Students who are rejected for the Thesis Option may appeal in writing to the MSW Program Director for review. Such an appeal needs to be made within 7 working days after receiving the notice.
5. Registration for independent study credits according to the University calendar.
6. The thesis committee needs to be informed no later than **October 1** before the research proposal is submitted for approval.
7. Submission of research proposal: **October 1**.
8. Final date for approval of proposal: **October 15**.
9. Submission of thesis by **March 31** of the final year of course work.
10. Thesis oral defense and revision of thesis: **April 1 to April 30**. Any revision must be done on or before **April 30**. A final copy is to be submitted before **April 30**.
11. Notice of approval or rejection of final thesis: **May 10** or the final day of the spring semester.

NOTE:

1. After the Thesis Option Application Form is approved and registration to the directed study is done, a student may decide not to pursue it, with the following consequences:
   a. The student would receive a failing grade (F) in SWRK 698 if unable to withdraw from it before the university deadline.
   b. The student must take SWRK 640.
   c. The student would need to take courses to fulfill the elective requirements.
   d. This would potentially delay graduation.
2. Only a few students will be approved for thesis option each year.

All complaints and appeals for matters in relation to the thesis option must be addressed to the MSW Program Director in writing within 7 days after the disputed decision or practice occurred.

Thesis Option Application Form

All research thesis proposals **must be approved** by the MSW Program Director, as well as the Chair for the Research Sequence and Thesis Option and the student's Thesis Advisor. All approval signatures must be obtained **by April 15** in the Spring Semester prior to the Fall when the student will commence work on the thesis. Students should begin the process of developing and negotiating their proposal **well in advance** of the stated deadline.

Student _____

Thesis Advisor _____

Date _____

Instruction to student: Attach a description of your proposed thesis which includes the following:

1. **Topic:** State the proposed topic that you will explore in this thesis. It must be one that is pertinent to social work practice and research. Also, identify if a knowledge gap exists in this topical area that your research could help address.

2. **Goals and Objectives:** What are the explicit goals and objectives of the thesis?

3. **Rationale:** What knowledge and skills do you hope to acquire as a result of completing this thesis?

4. **Products:** What final products will result from this thesis project? Note: the **minimal expectation** is that you will produce a publishable manuscript that conforms to all thesis requirements of the WKU Graduate School. You will also submit a research proposal for approval before commencing the research and have a formal oral defense at the conclusion of the thesis.

You are expected to **meet regularly with your thesis advisor** to review your progress on the project.

_____
Student Signature (and Date)

_____
Thesis Advisor Signature (and Date)

_____
MSW Program Director Signature (and Date)

_____
Chair for the Research Sequence and Thesis Option Signature (and Date)

APPENDIX E: Institution's Affirmative Action Plan

The Department of Social Work functions within a broader university milieu that supports a learning context that respects and embraces diversity.

The following is a link to the [Western Kentucky University Equal Opportunity Office](#)

The mission of the Western Kentucky University (WKU) Office of Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action / University ADA Services (EEO) is to promote, sustain, and advance an environment that supports principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and community. Diversity, equity, accessibility, and tolerance encompass the core values of the EEO. We incorporate these values through a proactive stance in assisting the University with the interpretation, understanding, and application of federal and state laws and regulations that impose special obligations in the areas of equal opportunity and affirmative action. Our mission is supported by our commitment to continuously develop, implement, evaluate, and revise (as necessary) action-oriented programs aimed at promoting and valuing diversity in the University's faculty, staff, and student body.

Western Kentucky University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, veteran status, or marital status in admission to career and technical education programs and/or activities, or employment practices in accordance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Revised 1992, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Employees with disabilities, who need a reasonable workplace accommodation, should submit the request to this office

Applicants with disabilities, who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in the application process, may contact the office of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action/University ADA Services (EEO) at (270) 745-5121 or the Department of Human Resources at (270) 745-5360 for information and assistance.

Students with disabilities, who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in and access University programs, should register with the [Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC)](#). Student [ADA Registration Information](#) includes steps for submitted for an accommodations request

APPENDIX F: Professional Concerns Form

Student Name _____

ID Number _____

Advisor _____

Briefly describe Professional Concern. (Please attach documentation.)

Reporting Party Dated Signature _____

Program Director Dated Signature _____

Student Advisor Dated Signature _____

Recommended Action:
_____(1) a plan of action in the form of a Student Success Plan (Please attach.)
_____(2) a referral to MSW Program Committee for further review
_____(3) a referral to initiate the termination process.

Student Signature_____ **Date**_____

Advisor Signature_____ **Date**_____

Committee Action:
_____(1) Continue in Program/No Action
_____(2) Withdrawal
_____(3) Termination
_____(4) Plan
_____(5) Other

_____   _____
Signature – Chair   Date   Signature- Dept Head   Date