

**East Tennessee State University**

**Department of Social Work**

# **MSW Program**

# ***Student Handbook***

(Revised January 2026)



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**EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

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DEPARTMENT OF  
Social Work

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While we strive to keep information in this handbook current, all material is subject to updates. Please be sure to check and follow the most recently updated version.

## Welcome from the MSW Program Director

Dear MSW Student,

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I welcome you to the Master of Social Work (MSW) Program at East Tennessee State University. Housed in the historic Lyle House, the MSW Program is fully and unconditionally accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and has been since its inception in 2003.

We are proud to offer a high quality MSW program with a clinical concentration where students learn and practice skills in engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation with individuals, groups, and families within the Social Work framework.

This handbook is intended as a supplement to the [University Graduate Catalog](#). Here, you will find information about MSW Program requirements and answers to frequently asked questions. Faculty advisors are happy to assist students with any needed clarification of the material in this handbook and provide answers to questions not contained in it.

Please refer to this handbook often while enrolled in the MSW Program. I wish you well in your academic studies and please feel free to contact me with your questions.

Sincerely,

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MSW Program Director

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## Faculty/Staff Contact Information

Please see this current and full listing of Department of Social Work [faculty and staff](#) including contact information.

## MSW Program Overview

The mission and goals of the East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Master of Social Work (MSW) Program remain focused on delivery of a clinical curriculum, as has been the case since the inception of the program. The program definition of “clinical practice” is defined as a model of practice that involves those activities with and on behalf of clients, especially those activities completed in the client's presence and with the client's collaboration. These activities are informed by an ecologically based biopsychosocial assessment. These interventive and change oriented activities are based on a range of theories with the clinical social worker selecting the one most appropriate for the client's situation. These activities may take place in an individual, family, or group setting. While focusing on those activities done in direct contact with clients, clinical social workers must also be prepared to make indirect contacts on behalf of clients. Those contact functions include advocacy, consultation, referral, and supervision. All social workers, including clinical social workers, should be aware of the impact of social policies upon their clients, and as citizens knowledgeably engage in the democratic process in the common struggle for economic and social justice.

### Mission and Goals

The East Tennessee State University Department of Social Work MSW Program is committed to excellence in evidence informed education and professional preparation of clinical social workers who treat all people with dignity and respect and who, utilizing a person-in-environment framework and global perspective, facilitate attainment of optimal social, economic, health, and environmental conditions for clients and their communities, especially in Southern Appalachia.

The mission and goals of the program are integrated with the competencies defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) [Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards](#):

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and

### Environmental Justice

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

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

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

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

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

## MSW Program Goals

Goal 1: To prepare students with the knowledge, values, and skills of clinical practice.

Goal 2: To prepare students to engage in competent and responsible clinical practice within the professional practice community.

Goal 3: To prepare students to develop and use ethical research in the advancement and enhancement of social work practice.

Goal 4: To provide service at the university, local, state, regional, national, and global levels.

Goal 5: To increase the availability of skilled advanced practice social work professionals in this region.

The Master of Social Work Program at ETSU has two entrance points – entrance via the traditional program of study (63 credit hours) and entrance via the advanced standing program of study (37 credit hours). Those students starting through the traditional entrance point begin with foundation courses. The foundation curriculum is designed to orient and socialize students to the profession of social work and to prepare

them with a generalist perspective for working with all levels of client systems. After the foundation courses, focus shifts to a clinical specialized practice curriculum, chosen by the Department of Social Work in collaboration with ETSU Administration, community agencies, and consulting social work professionals. Admission into the advanced standing program of study requires a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a CSWE-accredited program awarded after 1984.

By successfully completing the ETSU MSW Program, students meet requirements for the educational component of many states' social work licensure. However, it is the student's responsibility to check their state's requirements and ensure alignment. Completion of the MSW Program does not guarantee licensure.

## **MSW Program Curriculum Overview**

### **Traditional and Advanced Standing Curricular Options**

The MSW Program offers two curricular options to students enrolled, the "Traditional" and the "Advanced Standing." Both program of study options expect that students meet the identical concentration requirements and students in the Advanced Standing option take three elective course requirements. (Students in the Traditional option take two electives.) The Advanced Standing curriculum is composed of the Specialized Practice Curriculum. The specialized practice curriculum is designed to provide students with advanced content in clinical practice (as defined elsewhere in this handbook). In contrast, the Foundation curriculum of the Traditional option is designed to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and ethical appreciation essential to "generalist" social work practice, which is also the central focus of BSW Programs. In brief, the Advanced Standing program of study option honors knowledge and skill development acquired by graduates of CSWE-accredited BSW programs by waiving courses comprising the ETSU MSW Foundation curriculum.

### **Field Education**

Field education provides an opportunity for students to engage in activities with or on behalf of clients and designed to allow application of social work skills, knowledge and values learned in the classroom to situations encountered in the professional practice community. Field education, as the signature pedagogy of Social Work education, provides the setting wherein the integration of thinking and doing takes place. Academic integration is, and should be, a two-way process that flows in both directions. This vital integration takes place as a result of planning and executing at many levels.

MSW Foundation students are in field for 480 hours over two semesters (approximately 16 hours/week). (This will be 430 total starting in Spring 2026.) MSW Specialized Practice (Clinical) students are in field for a total of 600 hours over two semesters (approximately 20 hours/week). The MSW field staff work with students to be assigned a field internship through the placement process. Please see the Field Education portion of the MSW Program website for more information.

### **Field Seminars and Faculty Field Liaisons**

Field education consists of both actual practice/observation through practice settings as well as regular (generally, weekly) field seminar sessions. These sessions are facilitated by the Instructor of Record (IR) for the field education section in which the student is formally enrolled and emphasize discussion of students' experiences in their field placements, especially as these involve issues relating to professional ethics and the "real life" challenges of applying content taught in conventional classes to the dynamic environment of practice settings. The IR also serves as the formally designated "field liaison" between the MSW Program and the student's field education setting. The field liaison is the "first point of contact" for both students and field instructors (or task supervisors) regarding agency provided field educational experiences and any problem that might arise which if unaddressed would interfere with student learning and/or agency operation. The field director provides support to the faculty field liaisons and participates in problem solving activities when an issue in field arises.

## Field Instructors

Field instructors provide the close planning, support, and supervision to the student in the field. The field director provides an orientation and basic training to the MSW field experience, objectives, core competencies, practice behaviors, and how field provides the setting for the field/classroom integration of knowledge, values, and skills. Course outlines and assignment requirements are provided to enable the field instructor to support student integration and application of learning.

## Programs of Study

The traditional program of study option is designed to be a two-year full-time or four-year part-time experience. The advanced standing option is designed to be a three-semester full-time or two-year part-time experience. The typical sequencing of courses for the programs of study is provided on the MSW Program website. [Please see the ETSU MSW Program website for the course sequences for full and part-time options.](#)

## Part-time Degree Plan

Students electing to attend on a part-time basis enroll in two courses each semester. Students essentially follow the same sequencing associated with the full-time counterpart - just over a longer period. Students should be attentive to individual course prerequisites. The part-time sequencing of courses is available on the program website. Students, in consultation with their advisor, determine an appropriate plan. Deviations from the degree plan cannot be accommodated.

## Program Options

Students in the on-ground Main Campus (Johnson City, TN) program option and those in the online program option can expect to receive the identical education with only the modality being different. Students may meet with their assigned faculty advisor every semester. The required online program option courses are closed to Main

Campus students and vice versa unless special permission is given by the MSW Program Director. All degree requirements must be completed within a six-year period.

## Course Descriptions

Courses in the MSW curriculum are identified below. Course descriptions are available in the [Graduate School catalog](#).

### Foundation Courses

Foundation courses are often referred to as 'first year' courses (because full-time, traditional students complete these classes their first year). These courses provide the basic skills, knowledge, and values of social work practice. These courses must be completed before taking Concentration courses. A list of Foundation courses is provided here.

- *SOWK - 5100 Social Work Practice Foundations I*
  - core course
- *SOWK - 5102 Human Behavior in the Social Environment I*
  - core course
- *SOWK - 5104 Social Welfare Policy and Services*
  - core course
- *SOWK – 5106 Foundation Field Internship I*
- *SOWK - 5202 Human Behavior in the Social Environment II*
  - core course
- *SOWK - 5203 Practice Foundations II*
  - core course
- *SOWK - 5205 Social Work Research*
  - core course
- *SOWK - 5220 Social Work Practice Foundations III*
  - core course
  - prerequisite: SOWK 5100
- *SOWK - 5206 Foundation Field Internship II*

## Specialized Practice Courses

Specialized Practice (Clinical) courses are often referred to as ‘second year’ courses (because full-time, traditional students complete these classes their second year). These courses provide advanced theoretical knowledge to guide clinical interventions. A list of clinical courses is provided here.

- SOWK - 5430 *Psychopathology*
  - core course
- SOWK - 5303 *Advanced Practice with Individuals I*
  - core course
  - prerequisite: SOWK 5510
- SOWK - 5305 *Personal Practice Evaluation (an exception is made here as Traditional students take this class concurrently with SOWK 5206 Foundation Field Internship II)*
  - core course
- SOWK - 5323 *Advanced Practice with Groups*
  - core course
  - prerequisite: SOWK 5510
- SOWK - 5325 *Advanced Practice with Individuals II*
  - core course
  - prerequisite: SOWK 5303
- SOWK - 5306 *Advanced Field Internship I*
- SOWK - 5313 *Advanced Practice with Families*
  - core course
  - prerequisite: SOWK 5510
- SOWK – 5510 *Foundations of Clinical Social Work Practice*
  - core course
- SOWK - 5406 *Advanced Field Internship II*
- SOWK 5(xxx) - *Practice Electives*

## Electives

To complete the degree plan, **traditional students select two practice electives** of particular interest and **advanced standing students select three practice electives**. Among those courses that have been offered in recent semesters are *Motivational Interviewing, Family Violence, Human Sexuality, Seminar in Substance Use and Addiction, Health Care Social Work, Regulation and Reprocessing, and Crisis Intervention*, as well as other topics.

### Non-SOWK electives

A student may take an ETSU graduate-level elective outside of the Department of Social Work under special circumstances. Should the student choose to take an elective course outside of the Department of Social Work (e.g., Counseling, Human Development and Learning, Public Health, Criminal Justice, etc.), they should first speak with their advisor to ensure that the elective is appropriate for the requirements of the MSW Program and discuss how the elective supports the student's clinical social work preparation. The student is responsible for gaining approval of the elective prior to registration, communicating with the Program Director, and ensuring that the elective shows correctly in DegreeWorks.

Below are the steps a student should take:

1. Meet with advisor (discussed above).
2. Contact the course instructor and request a copy of the syllabus (the most recently used syllabus is often acceptable, if the one that will be used for the class is not yet available).
3. Email the Graduate Coordinator the syllabus for approval and CC the advisor. Only after approval should the student register for the elective.
4. Once registered, the student should email the Graduate Coordinator with their name (official with ETSU), E number, ETSU email address, course number (e.g., COUN xxxx), complete and official course name, number of credits, and term.
5. The Graduate Coordinator forwards a copy of the confirmation from the Graduate School to the student. The student should monitor their DegreeWorks to ensure

that the course shows up under Advisor Approved Electives. Please note that this process could take up to a month.

## **MSW Program Policies and Procedures**

The Department of Social Work MSW Program, has developed policies that are meant to work cooperatively with the policies and procedures of the Graduate School. In the event there is a discrepancy, the [policies](#) developed by the Graduate School take precedence over those of the MSW Program.

### **Retention in the MSW Program**

To aid student success and in agreement with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, the ETSU MSW Program has developed a student evaluation procedure, performance review, and dismissal policies.

### **Criteria for Student Evaluation**

Student retention in the program will include criteria other than academic performance. The primary consideration for retention is determining the student's suitability for the social work profession. The social work graduate faculty is committed to retaining students who demonstrate the ability to be effective with client systems. To achieve these ends, students must present evidence of the following intellectual and personal qualities compatible with social work roles and functions:

- Sound interpersonal skills that would support respectful relationships and affirmation of people from diverse backgrounds.
- Strong motivation for a career in social work and suitability for the profession.
- Personal integrity that would demonstrate potential for meeting the objectives of the program and for adhering to the [Code of Ethics](#) established by the National Association of Social Workers.
- Critical thinking skills and skills in oral and written communication consistent with graduate-level standards.

Evaluation concerning the above attributes is based, in part, on course work that involves class participation, role playing situations, interactions among students, and discussion of issues concerning development in relation to the role of a masters-prepared social worker. Although this evaluation typically takes place in a formal classroom situation, it is possible that the evaluation of personal development as professional social worker may be separated from the academic evaluation upon which a grade is derived.

### **Academic Performance**

Expectations for academic performance in professional programs such as social work are more comprehensive than is true in other programs that are strictly academic in nature, such as English or Biology. Academic standards in the social work program include those that are of a cognitive, skill and scholastic nature, as well as those that are affective and professional in nature. These academic standards in combination are primary indicators of professional readiness for practice in the field of social work. Therefore, social work students are expected to behave in a manner that is consistent with the values, ethics, and conduct requirements of the profession of social work in their three primary roles in the program: as learners, as students in a professional program, and as future professional helpers.

It is quite possible that a student may receive a passing academic grade and still have difficulty demonstrating the characteristics necessary to become an effective MSW practitioner. The MSW faculty has a professional and ethical responsibility to carefully consider any characteristics or behaviors which may influence work with client systems. Students are expected to develop ongoing ways of addressing personal issues, coping effectively with stressors as they arise without interference of professional functioning, expanding knowledge and skill, and taking full advantage of learning opportunities provided by supervision.

## Grades

**Completion of all required courses with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and at least a grade of “B” in all [core courses](#) and field coursework is required for retention and graduation.**

Students may repeat a course for which the final grade is “B-” or lower only one time to complete graduation requirements. However, the second grade does not replace the first; all grades are computed into the GPA. When a student is assigned a grade of **B- or lower** in any course work or field work to be applied to their Plan of Study, the student will be notified by the instructor assigning the grade and asked to schedule a meeting with their academic advisor to develop a plan for remediation.

In addition, for students in the traditional program of study, no more than three grades of **B- or lower** are allowed in core courses during their entire program of study; for students in the advanced standing program of study, no more than two grades of **B- or lower** in core courses are allowed during their entire program of study. In all cases where a course is repeated, the second grade does not replace the first; all grades are computed in the GPA.

Grades for electives are held to the standards of the Graduate School, including maintaining a 3.0 GPA.

Satisfactory **completion of the foundation coursework is required before advancing** to concentration coursework and practicum. Any student with an Incomplete (**I**) in the foundation curriculum must resolve the Incomplete before moving forward to the concentration curriculum. In their final semester, all students will be expected to satisfactorily complete the program’s culminating experience which is the integrating activity of the program and includes a comprehensive evaluation of the student’s performance. For the MSW Program, that culminating experience is the specialized practice field experience.

A grade of **F** in any course (foundation, concentration, and/or electives inside or outside the Social Work Department, or field coursework) can result in dismissal from the MSW Program. After receiving the grade of **F**, the student will be requested to meet with the MSW Program Director. Following this meeting, the Program Director may request the student meet with faculty representatives for an Academic Performance

Review. If a student fails to attend either meeting, the MSW Program Director will communicate a recommendation of dismissal to the Dean of the Graduate School. If the Dean agrees with the recommendation, an official letter of dismissal will be sent to the student from the Graduate School and the student will be administratively withdrawn from classes. At this time, the student may no longer attend classes or be associated with field education experiences.

Please see the Graduate School policy on [Dismissal and Probation](#) for more information.

Faculty may elect to grant a student an Incomplete grade, per the Graduate School policy. In such a case, the student and faculty member should complete the form in Appendix B.

### **MSW Program Faculty Initial Concern Report**

An MSW Program Faculty Initial Concern Report (Appendix A) may be completed when a faculty member directly notes a student engaging in behaviors that might negatively impact their ability to be successful in the MSW Program. Refer to the MSW Field Manual when concerns are related to Field Education.

The process for completing an MSW Program Faculty Initial Concern Report follows:

1. Faculty member identifies area of concern and severity.
2. Faculty member completes the report.
3. Faculty meets with student and discusses the issue. A plan for success is determined jointly and documented.
4. Faculty member and student sign report.
5. Copies provided to student, faculty member, and MSW Program Director.
6. Faculty member and student meet again after the predetermined amount of time to discuss progress.
7. Copies provided to student, faculty member, and MSW Program Director.
  - a. Should the area of concern not be resolved, an Academic Performance Review may be warranted.

## Academic Performance Review

Faculty continually monitor students in terms of academic progress, social work effectiveness, professional and ethical behaviors, and interpersonal and intrapersonal development. In situations where a concern is identified that is on-going or is considered critical, a faculty member may request an Academic Performance Review and the MSW graduate faculty will meet with the student.

The process for Academic Performance Reviews is outlined as follows:

1. The student will be notified by the MSW Program Director via email about the APR.
2. Concerns will be expressed in writing and will be given to the student prior to the time of a meeting between student and faculty.
3. The MSW Program Director will coordinate a date and time and provide notification to all parties. The meeting will be held on the main campus of ETSU or synchronous Zoom.
4. The student will be given specific information about the concerns and will be given the opportunity in the meeting to respond.
5. The MSW faculty will reach agreement and make a recommendation for the student. The recommendation may be a plan for resolution and a timeline established to allow for changes prior to determining further action. If the concern identified is something that the faculty believe may not be corrected, then the recommendation may be for dismissal from the program.
6. The MSW Director will provide the faculty recommendation to the student via email following the meeting.
7. After the student has had time to comply with the plan, the faculty will meet to discuss the student's progress.
  - If the faculty believe the student has resolved the identified concern or is making sufficient progress toward resolution, a recommendation of no further action will be made.
  - If, after discussion, the faculty believe that expeditious progress toward resolution of the identified concern(s) has not taken place,

and if the faculty agree that the student will not be able to successfully achieve the academic progress, social work skills, professional and ethical behaviors, or intrapersonal and interpersonal effectiveness objectives needed to be successful in the program and in the profession, then a recommendation for withdrawal of the student will be communicated to the student. This action will take place only after a majority vote of the faculty has supported the recommendation of dismissal.

8. The student will be given the opportunity to present his or her position to the faculty and a final decision will then be rendered by the faculty.
9. If the MSW faculty recommends dismissal of a student, the student has the option to provide a written response. The written response is due within 5 business days to the MSW Program Director (to be shared with faculty who were at the APR) and provide information that the student may not have provided at the APR. The faculty will review the response and affirm or change their recommendation. If the decision is affirmed, the MSW Program Director will communicate the graduate faculty's decision to the Social Work Department Chair and Dean of the Graduate School. If the Dean of the Graduate School agrees with the faculty recommendation, an official letter of dismissal will be sent to the student from the Graduate School and the student will be administratively withdrawn from classes. At this time, the student may no longer attend classes or associated field education experiences.

As an academic performance review can be a stressful event, the student may bring one support person to the meeting. However, this person may not speak to the committee and may not be a legal representative of the student. The sole purpose of this individual is to serve as a supportive presence for the student.

## Criteria for Student Dismissal

A student may be dismissed from the ETSU Master of Social Work Program for academic conduct including but not limited to:

- Failure to meet the conditions of acceptance
- Failing course grades/GPA below the Graduate School' requirements for retention
- Unprofessional conduct
- Poor performance during field practicum/internships
- Failing the culminating experience
- Exceeding the allowed number of probationary semesters
- Failure to successfully meet Academic Performance Review recommendations

Some additional areas that may lead to a concern are addictive behaviors, illegal behaviors, beliefs and behaviors that are oppressive to individuals or groups, and behaviors which suggest possible danger to self or others. Additionally, the faculty reserve the right to consider data regarding student attitudes and behaviors from a variety of sources including public records, professional communications, and direct observation.

## Leave of Absence

According to ETSU College of Graduate and Professional Studies, there are four conditions under which a graduate student can petition for a Leave of Absence: personal exigency, personal illness, family care, and military service. Except in emergency situations, a student should submit a request before the start of the semester but must submit it no later than the Census Date of the semester in which the leave is needed.

Below are the steps a student should take:

1. Meet with advisor.

2. Upon receiving input and direction from the advisor, the student should submit the Leave of Absence request form found on the Grad Studies [website](#) and attach any required supporting documentation.

If a student does not re-enroll before the end of one academic year from the time the leave of absence was granted, the Graduate School will require a readmission [form](#) and approval of the MSW Program before the student can register for classes.

## Withdrawal from the University

Students withdrawing from the university - discontinuing matriculation in the university - during the first eight weeks of classes will receive a grade of **W** in all courses. Withdrawals from the university after the eighth week will be recorded with **W** or **WF** at the discretion of the instructor. All requests for withdrawal must be received in the Office of the Registrar no later than 4:30 p.m. two days before the last day of classes of any academic term. Under no circumstances will a student be permitted to withdraw from the university after that time. A student who does not withdraw by the official procedure will receive an **F** for each course. (See the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more details.) Please be aware that some [financial aid](#) may be impacted by a withdrawal.

## Transfer of Credit Hours from Other Graduate Programs

Students admitted to the MSW Program may request consideration of the transfer of courses from another ETSU graduate program, a regionally accredited U.S. institution, or an approved international institution. If the credits to be considered are from an MSW Program, that program must be accredited by [CSWE](#). Due to accreditation standards, only Social Work courses may be considered for transfer of required courses (non-Social Work courses may be considered for electives). The Department of Social Work MSW Program follows the Graduate School's policy specifying that a maximum of 50% of a student's program credit hours may be transfer credits from another institution or ETSU graduate program.

To be considered for transfer credit, the student must have earned at least a B in the course(s), the course(s) must match an ETSU MSW course(s), course(s) may not be from a completed degree program, and course(s) may not be extension or continuing education credits. Additionally, the matriculation limits for completing the MSW Program does begin with the first term for which credit for a course has been counted toward the program; the matriculation limit for the ETSU MSW program is six years. Please see the Graduate School [policy](#) on Matriculation (Time) Limits.

### **Transfer of Credit Hours from Non-MSW and MSW Graduate Programs**

The process for consideration of transfer courses is as follows:

1. Complete the [Graduate School's formal petition](#) electronically
2. Write a cover letter that includes the reason for the request, a list of the course(s) the student wishes considered for transfer, a copy of the course outline(s) and syllabus/i.
3. Submit the petition, cover letter, syllabus/i, and course outline(s) to the Graduate Coordinator via email.
4. After the Graduate Coordinator has decided regarding the request, it is forwarded to the Graduate School for their final decision. A letter of acceptance or non-acceptance of the requested transfer of credit hours will be sent to the student from the Graduate School.

### **Transfer between Program Options**

Students must take classes with their program option – either Main Campus or Online. Should circumstances require a permanent transfer to the other program option, the student must satisfy the following items:

- Achieve/maintain an overall GPA of cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Achieve/maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in all core courses and field work.
- Demonstrate self-awareness, ethical behavior, effective interpersonal communication, and critical thinking skills in compliance with the MSW Handbook.
- Be in good standing in the program.

To request a transfer to the other program option, the student must first meet with their academic advisor who will consult with the MSW Program Director. Included in the decision will be the capacity of the program delivery option under consideration. After the discussion, the advisor notifies the student of outcome.

## **Life Experience**

No academic credit is awarded for life experience, including practice experience.

## **Waiver by Examination**

Waiver by examination provides a mechanism for students to demonstrate knowledge they have acquired through previous educational experiences. Students who have been accepted into the MSW Program are given the opportunity to test out of four courses: SOWK 5102: Human Behavior and the Social Environment I, SOWK 5202: Human Behavior and the Social Environment II, SOWK 5104: Social Welfare Policy I, and SOWK 5205: Research.

Passing these examinations does not provide credits toward the degree; however, it does allow students to take extra electives. Students cannot challenge a course that has already begun nor can they challenge a course they have already completed. A passing grade of “B” or better on the challenge examination will be acceptable to allow a substitution of an elective in place of the required course.

Students are to make a formal, written request for examination to the MSW Program Director prior to the semester for which they are slotted to take the course. It is the responsibility of the student to complete additional substitution paperwork to gain credit for the alternate course taken.

## **Academic Advisement Policy and Procedures**

Advisement at ETSU is a continuous, interactive process between an advisor and a student which facilitates the development and achievement of the student’s

overall goals. Advisement is a distinct part of a student's educational experience provided by ETSU as a service.

## **Responsibility Shared**

A successful relationship between an advisor and a student depends upon shared responsibility. The advisor and student responsibilities are outlined in the [Academic Advisement Responsibilities Guide](#). Advisors and others at ETSU provide mentoring, advice, referrals, and information to help students make wise, informed decisions. The relationship students develop with their advisors is important to their success at ETSU. Students should consult with their advisors each semester and especially before making decisions that may affect their academic progress and success. Discussions with the advisor may include understanding degree requirements, dropping a class, withdrawing from ETSU, selecting courses, and exploring career options. Students are ultimately responsible for their academic decisions, including course selection, meeting prerequisites, and adhering to policies, procedures, and deadlines at ETSU.

## **Student Advisement**

The student advisement (academic and professional) process begins with the admission of a student to the program and continues until graduation. An MSW faculty advisor is assigned to each student and guides the student through the registration process, answering any question the student might have, and providing necessary forms and referrals. The MSW Program Director provides any needed additional information and guidance requested by the student. Students are guided through the decision-making process of becoming a part-time or full-time student.

The following guidelines are to be used when advising students in the MSW Program:

- Every student will be provided the opportunity to meet with their advisor concerning registration twice an academic year.
- All newly admitted students must be advised prior to beginning classes.

- All newly admitted students must complete the MSW New Student Orientation prior to the first day of classes.
- Advisors will use DegreeWorks and the course sequence for advisement.
- Students must have a 3.0 GPA to graduate.
- If a student's GPA drops below 3.0 the student will be placed on probation.
- Advisement for the Summer and Fall semesters is completed in the Spring. Advisement for Spring and Winter semesters is completed in November.
- No academic credit is given for work or volunteer experience.
- Completion of the MSW Program within six (6) years is a requirement.

## **Student Appeal Procedures**

### **Grade Appeal Process**

#### **Basis for Appeal**

A student may appeal a course grade if the student has evidence that the grade was assigned in a malicious, capricious, erroneous, or arbitrary manner. The following steps provide a guideline for the appeals process. All persons concerned with this process should make every attempt to adhere to the time schedule outlined in the following description of the appeals process.

#### **Appeal to the Faculty Member for Review of the Assigned Grade**

Within 10 business days after the beginning of the next term, excluding summer semester, the student should discuss the assigned grade with the faculty member. If it is found that the assigned grade is incorrect in the judgment of the faculty member, they will initiate the appropriate change. If the change is made at this point, the matter is concluded.

If the faculty member is no longer with the university, the student should confer with the departmental chair who will then make every effort to receive written input concerning the matter from the former faculty member. If it is not possible to receive

information from the former faculty member regarding the grade, then the student may appeal the grade as described below and the departmental chair will represent the interests of the faculty member who issued the grade.

### **Appeal to the MSW Program Director**

If the question of the assigned grade cannot be resolved between the student and the faculty member, the student may appeal in writing to the MSW Program Director. The written appeal to the MSW Program Director must be made by the end of the fourth week of the term. The student should include all known information relating to the appeal with the written appeal. After receiving such an appeal in writing from the student, the MSW Program Director shall review with the faculty member the substance of the student's appeal and seek to determine its validity. If the MSW Program Director determines that the assigned grade, in their judgment, is inappropriate, the MSW Program Director should recommend to the faculty member that the grade be changed. The faculty member may or may not concur with the MSW Program Director's recommendation.

The MSW Program Director will notify the student in writing within 14 calendar days of the appeal whether the assigned grade will be changed by the faculty member. If the grade is changed to the student's satisfaction, the matter is concluded. If the grade will not be changed, the MSW Program Director will also advise the student of the right of appeal to the chair of the department. If the grade will not be changed, copies of all written communication mentioned above should be sent by the chair to the dean of the college/school as described below.

### **Appeal to the Dean of The Graduate School**

If the grade is not changed to the satisfaction of the student at the departmental level, a graduate student may appeal the assigned grade, in writing, to the Dean of the Graduate School. With the written appeal, the student should provide all information possible relating to the appeal. The written appeal to the dean must be made within seven calendar days of receipt by the student of the notice from the department chair.

If the dean, the student, and the faculty member are unable to resolve the appeal informally, the dean shall convene an ad hoc committee, comprised of three members of the graduate council and three graduate students, all of whom shall have voting privileges. This committee shall elect a chair and hold a hearing concerning the appeal. At this hearing, all material relevant to the appeal shall be presented by the student, faculty member, department chair, dean of the college in which the course was taught, the Dean of the Graduate School, and any others who may be called to assist the committee. This administrative hearing allows for the student's due process.

## **Student Conduct and Rights & Complaint Policy and Procedure for Students**

East Tennessee State University is committed to respecting all members of the university community and providing fair treatment regarding complaints by students. The objective of the Student Complaint Policy and Procedure is to ensure that concerns and complaints of undergraduate or graduate students are addressed fairly and are resolved promptly. Complaints usually involve actions affecting students that are alleged to be unjust, inequitable, or create unnecessary hardship. A student may pursue this complaint procedure if they believe a problem is not governed by other complaint or appeal procedures at the University.

East Tennessee State University seeks to provide students, staff, and faculty members with a safe and secure learning environment, free of crime and or violations motivated by discrimination, sexual and other bias-related harassment. There are two important complaint policies not governed by the Student Complaint Policy and Procedure; Sexual, Racial, and Other Harassment, and Hate Crimes and Bias-Related Incidents. These types of complaints should be filed with the Special Assistant to the President for Equity and Diversity/Affirmative Action Director or, when a charge is by one student against another student, with the Dean of Students according to the procedures described in those policies.

Complaint procedures are found within the graduate catalog. Here is the [form](#).

## The Honor Code of the University

East Tennessee State University is committed to developing the intellect and ethical behavior of its students. Students found to be in violation of policies on plagiarism, cheating, and/or fabrication will be held accountable for their actions. Any knowledge of academic misconduct should be reported. **"I pledge to act with honesty, integrity, and civility in all matters."** ([Honor Code revised and adopted February 16, 2012.](#))

## Other Graduate School Policies

Please refer to the [Graduate Catalog](#) for complete policies and procedures related to plagiarism, student bill of rights, student disciplinary policies, sexual harassment, complaints, and other important information.

## Graduation Information

A Master of Social Work degree is not granted solely based on a collection of credits in prescribed courses. Multiple criteria are used in admission to the program, continuance in the program, and graduation. Admission to the program does not guarantee continuance in the program. Field Internship and curricular course work is typically completed concurrently, and it is in the Field Internship that the most direct measures of social work ability are assessed. The Master of Social Work degree will be conferred upon those students who meet the following requirements:

- Satisfactory completion of all retention and graduation requirements as outlined in the [ETSU Graduate Catalog](#).
- Satisfactory completion of no less than 63 semester hours for those admitted to the Traditional Entry program of study and 37 semester hours for those admitted to the Advanced Standing program of study.
- Completion of all non-elective courses with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and at least a **B** in all courses applied toward the MSW degree; this includes all required core foundation and specialized practice courses, and field coursework applied toward the Plan of Study.

- Social Work elective courses are not held to the B or better requirement. Elective course grades must meet the minimum standard set by The Graduate School.
- Satisfactory completion of the Foundation coursework is required before advancing to Concentration coursework and practicum. Students may repeat a course for which the final grade is **B-** or lower only one time to complete graduation requirements. However, the second grade does not replace the first as all grades are computed in the GPA.
- Satisfactory completion of the program's culminating experience which is the integrating activity of the program and includes a comprehensive evaluation of the student's performance.

The Registrar's office publishes [graduation information](#) for each term on its website and provides all deadline and instructions for meeting graduation requirements.

## **Culminating Experience**

The Graduate School requires all master's degree programs to provide a culminating experience that includes an integrating activity and a comprehensive evaluation of the student's performance. For the ETSU MSW Program, all students meet requirements of the Culminating Experience by successfully completing the concentration field experience in their last semester prior to graduation and receiving an acceptable performance evaluation.

## **Social Work Student Clubs and Organizations**

### **Master of Social Work Student Association**

The Social Work Department has active student organizations at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Master of Social Work Student Association (MSWSA) is a student-led and faculty-advised student organization for all MSW students. The MSWSA is an official ETSU student organization. The MSWSA is an active organization and performs a variety of important tasks.

The MSWSA meets monthly and invites a variety of community guest speakers to address areas of student interest and increase their exposure to diverse settings, practice experiences, and populations of people. The student organization has had guest speakers present on topics such as stress management, coordinating local service providers, and working with geriatric clients and their families.

The MSWSA organizes student participation in the NASW Tennessee Chapter's Social Work Legislative Conference (Day on the Hill) each Spring in Nashville. This is one of the biggest state NASW lobbying events in the nation and is the biggest annual lobbying event in Tennessee. Several dozen of our students join over 500 social workers at the state capitol for advocacy education and meetings with legislators. This event is paid for through MSWSA fundraising efforts throughout the year.

Student representatives from MSWSA are invited to serve on faculty and staff search committees, community advisory boards, and the MSW Program committee. This student involvement allows for critical input on topics such as curriculum development, field education, and policies (e.g., admission and retention).

## **Phi Alpha Honor Society**

The purpose of Phi Alpha Honor Society is 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 international headquarters is at East Tennessee State University. For more information, please see the International [Phi Alpha](#) website.

## **Campus Resources and Services**

A variety of resources and services exist for students. For more information, please use the following links:

[Career Services](#)

[Counseling Center](#)

[Disability Services](#)

[University Health Center](#)

[Office of Human Resources at ETSU](#)

[Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies](#)

[Dean of Students](#)

[Financial Aid](#)

[International Students](#)

## Graduate Assistantships

The MSW Program has a limited number of Graduate Assistantships (20-hour work requirement per week in exchange for full tuition paid plus stipend). These awards are **highly** competitive and only full-time graduate students qualify. To apply, the student should see the MSW Program website after receiving their letter of acceptance.

Students are encouraged to apply for Graduate Assistantships [across campus](#).

## Select Professional Social Work Resources

[Association of Social Work Boards](#)

[National Association of Black Social Workers](#)

[National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\)](#)

[NASW Code of Ethics](#)

[NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice](#)

[NASW Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice](#)

[North Carolina State Social Work Certification and Licensure Board](#)

[Tennessee Social Work Licensure Board](#)

[Virginia Board of Social Work](#)

Appendix A: MSW Program Faculty Initial Concern Report

**MSW Program Faculty Initial Concern Report**

The purpose of this form is to identify and bring awareness to initial concerns faculty raise regarding observed student behavior(s). The MSW Program values its students. This process is designed to ensure MSW students have the resources they need and a plan for action to be successful in the program.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ E# \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty name: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Name and Number (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty – identify the concerning behavior from the list below and indicate a numerical value to correspond with the behavior indicating severity. For behaviors not on this list, please write them under “other.”

The faculty member raising the concern will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the issue(s) and develop a plan for success. When this form is completed and signed by both the faculty member and the student, the student and MSW Program Director will receive copies of the form. Faculty member follows up with student as specified in this form.

**Severity Rating:**

1 = Minor: behavior has been observed infrequently and/or is only mildly disruptive/concerning

2 = Moderate: behavior has been observed occasionally and/or is becoming disruptive/concerning

3 = Significant: behavior has been observed frequently and/or is severely disruptive/concerning

<b>Areas of Concern</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Absent from or tardy to class or leaves class early			
Sleeps during class			
Inappropriate attire			
Poor written or oral communication skills; poor grammar skills; inability to articulate points in a professional manner; overuse of informal language in written assignments			
Evidence of plagiarism/poor APA style adherence			

Lacks independence in completing work (for example: overly dependent on additional instructions from instructor, dependent on other students for help, etc.)			
Minor disruptive behaviors in class (for example: chatting with others; inappropriate use of electronics; overly communicative, which bars others from contributing to discussions and impedes instructor's ability to conduct class, etc.)			
Work performance does not meet minimal requirements or expectations; work turned in incomplete or late; unprepared for class			
Inappropriate comments in class; too much personal sharing, often inappropriately; acts out of self-interest in most situations			
Immaturity in behavior; lack of self-awareness			
Boundary issues			
Poor coping skills			
Personal problems and issues interfere with learning and performance			
Inability to work in groups – does not carry fair load in group, lack of collaborative skills in working with others			
Dishonesty of any type			
Disrespectful to clients, faculty, staff, or other students (for example: in discussing sensitive issues such as diversity, being insensitive to the feelings/needs of others, etc.)			
Personal beliefs interfere with acceptance of core social work values; unable to internalize core social work values; overly biased with personal viewpoints to the extent that there is no openness to professional growth; danger of imposing these beliefs in practice; ethnocentric in viewpoints			
Other concern(s):			
1)			
2)			
3)			

Short narrative that further elaborates concern(s):

Plan for corrective action:

Student response:

*These concerns were discussed with the student and the student was provided a copy of this document.*

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Follow-Up:**

Faculty and student shall meet again by \_\_\_\_\_ to review the concerns and the success of the plan for corrective action.

Update:

Student response:

*These concerns were followed-up-on with the student and the student was provided a copy of this document.*

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Report on Assignment on Incomplete Grade

### Report on Assignment of Incomplete Grade

*This form should be completed by the student and instructor*

#### **According to the ETSU School of Graduate Studies Catalog Policies and Procedures:**

***Incomplete Grades*** – A grade of “I” (incomplete) indicates that a student was passing the course at the end of the semester, but due to circumstances beyond the student’s control, was unable to complete the course requirement. It also indicates that the student has received consent from the instructor to complete the work for which an “I” is assigned. The “I” grade cannot be used to allow a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade or to repeat a course. An “I” grade must be removed no later than one calendar year from the time the grade is awarded. Time extension requests for removal of “I” grades must be submitted to and approved by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies before the allotted time expires. An “I” grade not removed under the guidelines noted above will be converted to an “F.” When an “I” grade converts to an “F” after one calendar year, the GPA is adjusted retroactively; consequently, a student may be subject to dismissal without a probationary term. A student cannot withdraw from or drop a course after a grade of “I” has been assigned or after one year has elapsed. To remove an “I” grade, the student must complete the work independently and must not register for the course a second time or attend the same course at a later time in order to complete the course requirements.

#### **Student information**

Name:

E#:

ETSU Email Address:

#### **Instructor Information**

Name:

ETSU Email Address:

#### **Department Chair Information**

Name:

ETSU Email Address:

**Course Information**

Course Name:

Course Number and Section:

Semester and Year:

**Specific requirements to be completed by the student:**

**Deadline(s) for specific requirements:**

*I understand that it is my responsibility to complete this contract, be in contact with the instructor, and follow-up with the instructor.*

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

*A copy of this contract should be provided to the student and the instructor.*

*\*NOTE: If the instructor listed on this form is no longer employed at ETSU at the time of the deadline, the student should refer to the Department Chair.*