

East Tennessee State University

Department of Social Work

MSW Program

Student Handbook

2020-2021



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF
Social Work

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While we strive to keep information in this handbook current, all material is subject to updates (revised 8/2020). All revisions to the *MSW Student Handbook* during the respective academic year are applicable for fall, spring, and summer sessions.

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.

This handbook is intended as a supplement to the University Graduate Catalog - <https://www.etsu.edu/reg/catalog/>. This handbook provides information about MSW Program requirements and provides 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 feel free to contact me with your questions.

Sincerely,

Brittany Wilkins, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.

MSW Program Director

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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, must be aware of the impact of social policies upon their clients, and as citizens knowledgeably engage in the democratic process in 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: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

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

Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

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

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

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

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, 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 public and private agencies.

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 requires a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a CSWE-accredited program awarded subsequent to 1984. Once admitted, advanced standing students begin the clinical concentration curriculum after completing the *Psychopathology* course.

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 require that students meet the identical concentration requirements; students in the Advanced Standing option take three elective course requirements. (The Advanced Standing Curriculum is composed of the Specialized Practice Curriculum preceded by the *Psychopathology* course which is provided to facilitate student transition into advanced graduate study.) 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 most 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 agency based practice. 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. MSW Specialized Practice (Clinical) students are in field for a total of 600 hours over two semesters. 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 social service agencies 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 agency-based practice. 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) with regard to 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 three 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 program options is provided on the MSW program website. Please see the Department of Social Work MSW Program website for the programs of study for full and part-time options at the Johnson City campus and the part-time programs of study for the extended campus locations.

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 MSW Degree Plan - just over a longer period of time. Students must be attentive to individual course prerequisites. Examples of part-time sequencing of courses are available on the program website. Students should consult with their advisor to determine an appropriate plan.

Students enrolled at an off-campus, part-time distance education site should consult their advisor for the sequencing of courses associated with the respective location and degree plan. No deviations from the degree plan are allowed.

Since some courses for part-time distance education students are “floating,” there may be semesters where students must take more than two courses. The Graduate School requires full immunization records for students taking 8.99 or more credit hours a semester. Please consult with your advisor about this requirement.

Distance Education

Students at the distance education sites can expect to receive the identical education as students experience on the main campus. An assigned faculty advisor will meet with students every semester. Each group of students may select a representative to act as liaisons with the MSW Student Association (MSWSA) and MSW Program Director. The courses at distance education sites are closed to outside students and only available to those students that have committed to attending classes at the respective site, unless special permission is given by the MSW Program Director. All degree requirements must be completed within a six-year period.

Locations

Asheville, NC

The location for the Asheville Part-Time Distance Education MSW Program site is Lenoir Rhyne University Center for Graduate Studies of Asheville, 36 Montford Avenue, Asheville, NC. More information about the Asheville location, including course sequencing, is available on the program website. Dr. Kelly Reath is the site coordinator for the Asheville location. More information about the Asheville location, including course sequencing, is available on the program website.

Abingdon, VA

The location for the Abingdon Part-Time Distance Education MSW Program site is Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, 1 Partnership Cir, Abingdon, VA. ETSU's MSW Program is certified to operate by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). Dr. Rana Duncan-Daston is the site coordinator for the Abingdon location. More information about the Abingdon location, including course sequencing, is available on the program website.

Sevierville, TN

The location for the Sevierville Part-Time Distance Education MSW Program site is ETSU at Sevierville, 2025 Red Bank Rd, Sevierville, TN. Ms. Tiffany Presnell is the site coordinator for the Sevierville location. More information about the Sevierville location, including course sequencing, is available on the program website.

Course Descriptions

Courses in the MSW curriculum are identified below. Course descriptions are available in the Graduate School catalog - <https://www.etsu.edu/reg/catalog/>

Foundation Courses

Foundation courses are often referred to as 'first year' courses (because full-time 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 here provided.

- *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
 - prerequisite: SOWK 5102
- *SOWK - 5203 Practice Foundations II*
 - core course
 - prerequisite: SOWK 5100
- *SOWK - 5205 Social Work Research*
 - core course
- *SOWK - 5220 Social Work Practice Foundations III*
 - core course
- *SOWK - 5430 Psychopathology*
 - core course
- *SOWK - 5206 Foundation Field Internship II*

Specialized Practice Courses

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

- *SOWK - 5303 Advanced Practice with Individuals I*
 - core course
- *SOWK - 5305 Personal Practice Evaluation*
 - core course
 - prerequisite: SOWK 5205 or Advanced Standing or permission by MSW Director)
- *SOWK - 5323 Advanced Practice with Groups*
 - core course
- *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
- *SOWK - 5403 Administrative Practices in Human Services Organizations*
 - core course
- *SOWK - 5406 Advanced Field Internship II*
- *SOWK 5(xxx) - Practice Electives*

To complete the degree plan, **traditional students select two practice electives** of particular career 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, Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Health Care Social Work, and Crisis Intervention*, as well as other topics.

Students should be mindful of the campus site when they register for classes. Please note the campus codes below when registering for classes. Please contact your advisor with any questions.

Location	Campus Code
Johnson City	23M
Asheville	ECK
Abingdon	EBX
Sevierville	E2P

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 School of Graduate Studies. In the event there is a discrepancy, the policies developed by the School of Graduate Studies take precedence over those of the MSW Program.

Retention in the MSW Program

In an effort to avoid having students meet with failure 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 seen as 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 in order 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-**, **C** or **C+** are allowed during their entire program of study; for students in the advanced standing program of study, no more than two grades of **B-**, **C** or **C+** 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 School of Graduate Studies, including maintaining a 3.0 GPA.

Satisfactory **completion of the foundation coursework is required before advancing** to concentration coursework and practicum. (The only exception is for traditional distance education students who begin their advanced classes while completing their first field experience.) 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 (see Culminating Experience section). 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 initially 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 School of Graduate Studies. If the Graduate School agrees with the recommendation, an official letter of dismissal will be sent to the student from the School of Graduate Studies 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 School of Graduate Studies policy on [Dismissal and Probation](#) for more information.

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 cases where a concern is identified that is an on-going one or is considered critical, a faculty member may request an Academic Performance Review and the MSW graduate faculty, as a whole, 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.
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 student will be notified of the date and time of the meeting by the MSW Program Director. The meeting will be held on the main campus of ETSU.
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 time

line 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, as a whole 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 MSW Program Director will communicate the graduate faculty's decision to the Social Work Department Chair and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. If the Graduate School agrees with the faculty recommendation, an official letter of dismissal will be sent to the student from the School of Graduate Studies and the student will be administratively withdrawn from classes. At this time the student may no longer attend classes or associated field education experiences.

Criteria for Student Dismissal

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

- Failure to meet the conditions of acceptance
- Failing course grades
- Unprofessional conduct
- Poor performance during field practicum/internships
- Failing the culminating experience
- Exceeding the allowed number of probationary semesters

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 reserves 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

If a student elects to take a leave of absence from the program of study, they need to consult with the assigned advisor first. After receiving input and direction from the advisor, the student may submit a written request for a leave of absence to the MSW Program Director providing their rationale and plan of action. If a student does not re-enroll before the end of one academic year from the time the leave of absence was granted, Graduate Studies 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.)

Transfer of Credit Hours

The Department of Social Work MSW Program has set the following policies regarding the transfer of credit hours from other non-MSW programs and other MSW programs.

Transfer of Credit Hours from Non-MSW Graduate Programs

It is the policy of the MSW Program that students admitted to the MSW Program may request consideration of the transfer of no more than nine credit hours from non-MSW graduate programs. These courses MAY NOT be older than six years at the time of graduation and the students MUST have received a grade of **B** or higher. These credit hours MAY NOT be in any of the core curriculum courses.

The process for consideration of transfer courses is as follows:

1. Any student who wishes to have the MSW Program consider acceptance of course/courses for transfer from another institution must complete the [Graduate School's formal petition](#) and submit it to the MSW Program Director with a cover letter explaining their request.
2. The letter should list the courses the student wishes considered for transfer and a copy of the course outline for each course must accompany the letter.
3. Upon receipt of the letter of request for consideration, the MSW Program Director will consider the request.
4. After the MSW Program Director has made a decision 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 of Credit Hours from a CSWE Accredited MSW Program

The MSW Program recognizes that CSWE prescribes educational outcomes required for the Foundation curriculum of the traditional MSW Program option. For this reason, the curriculum content of the foundation year is essentially the same in all MSW Programs. Therefore, students who have been accepted into the MSW Program and who have completed part of their foundation year in a CSWE accredited MSW Program or an MSW Program that has been admitted to Candidacy, may request to transfer a maximum of nine credit hours. These courses MAY NOT be older than six years at the date of the student's graduation and the student MUST have received a grade of **B** or higher in all of the courses. These credit hours would include courses equivalent to SOWK 5100, 5101, 5102, 5104, 5106, 5202, 5203, 5205, 5206, 5220, and an elective. The process for consideration of transfer courses is as follows:

1. Students who have completed only part of the foundation year at a CSWE-accredited MSW Program, and who wish to have the ETSU MSW Program consider acceptance of a course/courses for transfer from another institution, must complete the [Graduate School's formal petition](#) and submit it to the MSW Program Director with a cover letter explaining the request. The letter should list the courses the student wishes considered for transfer and a copy of the course outline for each course must accompany the letter.
2. Upon receipt of the letter of request for consideration, the MSW Program Director will consider the request for the transfer of credit(s) by the MSW Program.
3. After the MSW Program Director has made a decision 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 from One Campus Site to Another within the Department of Social Work

In an attempt to meet the changing needs of our students and community at large, once accepted into the Department at a specific campus, students are permitted to transfer from one ETSU MSW Program campus site to another given satisfaction of the following items:

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

In order to request a transfer to a different program site, the student must first meet with their academic advisor, who will then consult with the MSW Director and the site coordinators involved. Included in the decision will be the capacity at the site 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. 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 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 foundation and concentration years of the MSW Program.

- Every student must be advised every semester.
- All newly admitted students must be advised prior to beginning classes in the foundation or concentration years.
- The Degree Plan form is to be used 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 of the year. Advisement for Spring and Winter semester is completed in November.
- No academic credit is given for work or volunteer experience.
- Students MUST complete the MSW Program within a period of six (6) years.

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 21 calendar days after the beginning of the next term, excluding summer school, 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 that 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 or not 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 Graduate Studies

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 School of Graduate Studies. 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.

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.

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 2020-2021 [Graduate Catalog](#) - <https://catalog.etsu.edu/index.php?catoid=37> - 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 on the basis of a collection of credits in prescribed courses. Multiple criteria are used in admission to the program, continuance in the program, and graduation (see below criteria). 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 Graduate Studies.
- 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 in order 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 School of Graduate Studies 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 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 each April 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 is paid for through MSWSA fundraising events throughout the year. ETSU's MSW students have won a poster presentation competition at the Legislative Conference in recent years.

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:

[Adult, Commuter and Transfer Services \(A.C.T.S.\)](#)

[Career Services](#)

[Counseling Center](#)

[Disability Services](#)

[Office of Equity & Inclusion](#)

[University Health Center](#)

[Office of Human Resources at ETSU](#)

[University Wellness Committee](#)

[Women's Studies](#)

[Multicultural Center](#)

Graduate Assistantships and Tuition Scholarships

The MSW Program has one full-time Graduate Assistantship to award within the department (20-hour work requirement per week in exchange for full tuition paid plus stipend) and six part-time Graduate Assistantship awards (10-hour work requirement per week in exchange for half tuition paid and half stipend). The department has two Tuition Scholarships to award. These awards are highly competitive and only full-time graduate students qualify. To apply, contact Phil Stork, the MSW Program Executive Aide after receiving your letter of acceptance. For more information -

<https://www.etsu.edu/gradschool/funding/gats.php>

Professional Social Work Resources

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

[NASW Code of Ethics](#)

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

[Association of Social Work Boards](#)

[State of Tennessee Social Work Licensure Board](#)

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

[Virginia Board of Social Work](#)