

1. Admissions/Advising

1.1. Orientation to the Program. The Social Work program provides an orientation to newly admitted MSW students in the face-to-face/hybrid programs. Online students are also welcome to attend.

1.2. Criminal Background Information. Please note, that a criminal background may cause barriers to social work field placement, licensure, and/or employment. Be aware that social work state licensure may be prohibited due to a criminal record. Do actively check the policy of the state in which you desire to obtain social work licensure for that state's laws and regulations governing licensure in the particular state. Be aware that MSW graduates who are seeking employment are typically screened for criminal history by the potential employer. Employers typically screen for criminal history before hiring an MSW job applicant. Additionally, a mandatory review of an applicant's prior child abuse and neglect record may occur. Such prior records may prevent employment with an employer.

1.3. Advising. College advising staff are available to provide academic advice to students.

1.3.1. Please contact our Graduate Coordinator, Heidi Waters at watersh2@nku.edu or maw@nku.edu for assistance.

1.3.2. Each student engaged in field education (SWK 650, 651, 652) also is advised by the MSW Field Director, Kelly Fallon, fallonk2@nku.edu

1.4. Transfer Credit. The program's policy and procedures for the transfer of credits are consistent with the university rules regarding transfer work published in the NKU Graduate Catalog. Additional notes regarding the transfer of graduate course credit:

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

1.4.2. Transfer of graduate/professional credits must be completed during the first term of enrollment at Northern Kentucky University.

1.4.3. Courses accepted for transfer must have been taken at a regionally accredited college or university for graduate credit and have received a grade of B or higher. Credit earned through correspondence courses, MOOCs, or work experience will not be transferred.

1.4.4. Credit earned at another university must be

submitted to the MSW Graduate Coordinator and MSW Program Director for approval and must include a course description and other supporting documentation, such as syllabi and other course materials.

- 1.4.5. The decision regarding transfer credits and the applicability to specific components of the student's course of study will be made by the MSW Program Director.

2. Progression to Degree

2.1. Orientation and Advising. Upon completion of admission and orientation, students are expected to complete the following:

- 2.1.1. Initiate contact with their advisors as needs arise, and discuss any issues and circumstances in which they need information, support, or clarification.
- 2.1.2. Identify areas of concern regarding any aspect related to their educational experience and communicate the concern to the appropriate person in the program.
- 2.1.3. Use their advisors as resources who can make appropriate referrals to other services as needed.
- 2.1.4. Register for classes as outlined on their approved course of study or notify their college and program faculty advisor of deviations in their course of study.
- 2.1.5. Complete field applications and meet with the Field Director to arrange their field placements.

2.2. Graduation Requirements. In addition to the requirements set forth by the NKU Graduate Catalog, and completion of all MSW courses and fieldwork, requirements for graduation from the MSW program include:

- 2.2.1. No student will be allowed to have a grade below a B- in Generalist Practice, Field Experience I, Field Experience II, and Field Experience III. Earning a grade below B- in any of these courses will necessitate repeating and successfully earning a grade of B- or higher to follow this policy. It will delay graduation term and may prevent enrollment in additional required courses (for example, field courses must be taken in sequence (see 2.2.2. below for more information) if the student has failed to earn a B- or higher in a pre-requisite course.
- 2.2.2. MSW students enrolled in the Advanced Standing

program must complete 600 hours of Field Experience and MSW students enrolled in the Standard Program (both face-to-face/hybrid and online accelerated) must complete 900 hours of Field Experience. Each course is required to be taken in sequence.

2.2.3. MSW students must complete a capstone course, Applied Research

II. Before enrolling in the culminating experience, students must have completed at least two-thirds of all coursework required for the degree program. Unless otherwise approved by the program director, all core courses also must be completed, with the possible exception of one core course that may be taken concurrently with the culminating experience.

2.2.4. Students must adhere to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* and the Professional Performance Expectations outlined below.

V. Professional Performance Expectations for Social Work Students

MSW students must adhere to the university's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities and Graduate Student Honor code found at <http://scra.nku.edu/Infostudents/Infostudents.html> and the National Association of Social Workers, *Code of Ethics* inside and outside of class.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*, the NKU Code of Student Rights and Responsibility, and the NKU Graduate Student Honor Code form the basis of student conduct standards when considering each student's suitability for professional social work, and continuation in the social work program. Faculty will work collaboratively regarding students' conduct and academic concerns with the student, the School of Social Work Student Concerns Committee, and/or full social work faculty, and/or School of Social Work Director/Program Directors. We require that students within the MSW Program understand the following in addition to adherence to the standards above:

Adherence to the Social Media Statement of Technology and Social Media Use.

The [Social Work Code of Ethics](#) mandates the ethical use of technology and social media. As such, we expect all of our NKU social work students to apply the principles of the Code of Ethics to their technology and social media use to ensure that their online presence does not

conflict with the professional standards of social work. Examples of behaviors that violate the social work Code of Ethics as it pertains to technology and social media use include, but are not limited to:

1. Posting details, photos, videos, or other types of information about clients on social media or other online platforms.
2. Interacting with, accepting friend requests from, or sending friend requests to clients via social media or other online platforms.
3. Conducting online searches for client information that is unrelated to the therapeutic relationship.
4. Violating the privacy and confidentiality of classroom discussions (e.g., discussion board material and other class discussions that are meant to be private) via the use of technology and/or social media.

It is important to remember that our technology and social media use is representative of who we are as professionals, and is representative of the School of Social Work at Northern Kentucky University. All technology and social media use should respect the confidentiality, privacy, and dignity of all clients.

Evidence of violating ethical technology and social media use is subject to faculty review and may result in remediation or removal from the NKU School of Social Work. Finally, course instructions and materials are for instructional use only. All other uses are strictly prohibited. Republication or reproduction of course instructions or materials is forbidden. If you have any questions, please contact your course instructors.

Professional Expectations of Student Behavior.

Adherence to the Professional Expectations of Student Behavior Statement.

The School of Social Work at Northern Kentucky University is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to foster and evaluate professional behavioral development for all students in the social work program. The social work program also bears a responsibility to the community at large to produce fully trained professional social workers who consciously exhibit the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession of social work. The values of the profession are codified in the NASW Code of Ethics. Given this context, all students will be expected to follow the ethical standards of behavior listed below:

A. Accountability. *Maintain a strong presence in all courses and demonstrate preparedness and engagement with course materials and feedback.*

Components:

- a.) Prompt, positive, engaged, and prepared engagement.
- b.) Prompt, positive, and prepared participation.
- c.) Completion of, and engagement with, all course assignments and materials.
- d.) Individual responsibility for course assignments, instructions, and expectations.
- e.) Welcome and incorporate constructive feedback

B. Respect/Civility. *Treat all peers, instructors, and community and campus contacts*

with dignity and respect at all times.

Components:

- a.) Pay attention while others are communicating, and pay attention to understand rather than immediately respond.
- b.) Address faculty members by professional titles, unless otherwise requested.
- c.) Provide feedback and engagement in a constructive and supportive manner.
- d.) Demonstrate professionalism and kindness in all professional communications.
- e.) Approach conflict positively and cooperatively.
- f.) Actively include team members and classmates in class activities and discussions.

C. Confidentiality. *Treat any personal information that you learn about a peer, instructor, or client as strictly confidential, unless consultation with an appropriate faculty member is necessary.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain confidentiality with any information shared with you.
- b.) Use professional judgment when considering a disclosure of information that is very personal in a class or team setting. This time is not to be used for your own therapy or treatment. If you are struggling with challenges, please see the instructor privately for information regarding additional campus resources.
- c.) Never use the names of clients or share identifying client information in a classroom or team setting.

D. Competence. *Apply yourself to all of your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, and according to the timelines and expectations established by your instructors.*

Components:

- a.) Participate in your courses with the appropriate books, materials, and syllabus, including locating and accessing additional materials as warranted.
- b.) Seek out appropriate support in a timely manner when having difficulties to ensure success in each class.
- c.) Utilize available campus resources, including the information technology help desk, the writing center, and Stealy Library.
- d.) Own responsibility for the quality of completed coursework.
- e.) Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal challenges that may impact effectiveness with clients, and actively address those areas.

E. Integrity. *Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors. Consistently strive to improve this ability as a lifelong learning goal.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain professionalism in interactions with peers, instructors, and campus and community partners.
- b.) Demonstrate commitment to positive, respectful, and honest interactions.
- c.) Self-evaluate responsibility and commitment on a regular basis, and address any identified areas for improvement.

d.) Maintain integrity when completing all coursework.

F. Academic Accountability. *Commit yourself to learning to communicate in a professional context.*

Components:

- a.) Do your own work, and take credit only for your own work. This includes paraphrases and citations and giving credit where credit is due.
- b.) Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed, and actively work to address those areas.
- c.) Complete work in a timely manner, and incorporate time to review your own work and any needed resources before submission.
- d.) Seek out and benefit from constructive feedback. This includes peer review, instructor reviews, and utilization of the campus writing center.

G. Commitment to Diversity. *Strive to become more open to people, populations, ideas, and creeds with which you may not agree. Embrace diversity as a positive component of our society.*

Components:

- a.) Maintain speech and professional interactions that are respectful and kind.
- b.) Exhibit a willingness to serve with and learn about and from diverse clientele, colleagues, and communities.
- c.) Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact, and an active engagement with evolving standards and expectations.

H. Communication. *Strive to improve non-verbal, verbal, and written communication skills. These skills are essential in our professional interactions.*

Components:

- a.) Present yourself in a positive and appropriate manner. This includes professional appearance and means that you should not wear offensive or inappropriate attire in a professional setting.
- b.) Actively maintain communication with classmates, instructors, and members of the NKU community. Self-isolation and a lack of communication are impediments to professional development.
- c.) Practice positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills in non-verbal, verbal, and written communication. This includes but is not limited to: in-person interactions, class discussions, and email correspondence.
- d.) Actively demonstrate appropriate body language, empathy, and listening skills in professional interactions.

I. Social Justice. *Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all persons.*

Components:

- a.) Develop and demonstrate an understanding of how personal and institutional factors impede the experience of social justice.
- b.) Strive to learn about and participate in social justice initiatives.
- c.) Seek and embrace learning opportunities about methods of empowering

populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Progression Requirements for Professional Performance Issues.

In addition to meeting the academic standards set forth above, students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner. To this end, they are expected to adhere to the standards of professional ethics and practice set forth by the MSW Program and the National Association of Social Workers.

The faculty will regularly monitor not only students' academic progress but also personal and interpersonal dynamics that may affect their performance as social work professionals. The purpose of this monitoring process is to ensure that all graduates of the Northern Kentucky University MSW Program are not experiencing personal and interpersonal characteristics that interfere with their professionalism or helping capacity.

As future professional social workers, the faculty expects students to exhibit the following personal and interpersonal characteristics (Professional Expectations of Student Behavior) throughout their time in the program:

- Accountability
- Respect and Civility
- Confidentiality
- Competence
- Integrity
- Academic Accountability
- Commitment to Diversity

These professional expectations of student behavior are presented in greater detail on pages 11-13 of this handbook.

Throughout the program, each Professional Performance Standard will be rated as “Below Expectations,” “Meets Expectations,” or “Exceeds Expectations,” as described in the Criteria for Professional Performance Standards Evaluation (Appendix A). Students will be rated as a component of every following MSW course.

Students receiving a rating “Below Expectations” on one or more of the Professional Performance standards will be considered deficient in professional performance and may be subject to Student Remediation.

Abstinence from Unacceptable Behaviors.

Unacceptable behavior is inconsistent with the behavior described by the School of Social Work at NKU, as mandated by the Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In determining whether the behavior is acceptable or unacceptable, consider how you would feel or react if you were on the receiving end of the behavior in question. The information below provides further guidance on what is unacceptable behavior in the School of Social Work at Northern Kentucky University. This behavior is unacceptable towards peers, faculty, field supervisors, or any other person or entity with which you are interacting as a

social worker/social work student. Examples of Unacceptable Behavior which are considered unacceptable in the School of Social Work at NKU include (but are not limited to) the following:

- a) Aggressive or abusive behavior, such as making threatening gestures or engaging in actual violence or assault
- b) Verbal abuse, such as yelling, screaming, or using abusive or offensive language
- c) Bullying, harassment, stalking, or intimidation
- d) Being under the influence of illicit drugs or impaired by alcohol
- e) Unwelcome physical contact including that of a sexual or threatening nature
- f) Teasing, name-calling, or ridicule
- g) Engaging in malicious gossip or complaints
- h) Producing abusive or harassing notes, emails, telephone calls, text messages
- i) Belittling the opinions of others
- j) Responding poorly to constructive feedback. This includes yelling at instructors, approaching your work with a defensive attitude, etc....
- k) Using offensive gestures and behavior
- l) Stealing or misuse of university resources
- m) Engaging in inappropriate technology or social media use (see Social Media statement above)

Student Remediation and Retention.

When the School of Social Work Faculty become aware of an academic and/or professional dispositional issue exhibited by a student, an appropriate faculty member will first discuss the concern(s) raised with the student directly. Examples of such concerns include deficiencies in the areas of academic performance, clinical effectiveness or judgment, or interpersonal functioning.

If the faculty member determines that the discussion(s) resolved the concern, no further action will be required. If such discussions do not resolve the concern, the following procedures will be implemented:

1. The faculty member will document the specific concerns and complete a Professional Performance Evaluation (PPE).
2. The faculty member will provide the student with a copy of the documentation and the PPE.
3. The faculty member will provide written notification to the MSW Program Director regarding the identified concerns.
4. The faculty member will consult with the MSW Program Advisor, the MSW Program Director, and any associated faculty who wish to contribute to developing a Professional Development Plan (PDP).

The PDP will contain the following elements (see Appendices B and C for examples):

- a. Expectations for the student;
 - b. Specific behaviors required of the student;
 - c. Remediation tasks to support the student's success; and,
 - d. Consequences for not meeting the expectations and behaviors outlined in the PDP.
5. As soon as is practical, the student and the issuing faculty will meet to discuss the PDP.

- a. The issuing faculty and the student will sign the PDP form to verify their understanding of the presented concerns, the required remedial actions, and the schedule for completing them.
 - b. Both the student and issuing faculty will receive copies of the signed PDP, and a copy will be forwarded to the student's academic advisor and the MSW Program Director.
6. If the student fails to show reasonable progress in meeting the conditions of the PDP, as determined by the issuing faculty, the student will be required to attend a review meeting to include the issuing faculty, the academic advisor, and the MSW Program Director.
7. After such a meeting with the student, the issuing faculty and academic advisor will consult the full School of Social Work faculty regarding the development of alternative remedial strategies and/or evaluation of the student's fitness for continuation in the MSW Program.
 - a. If a new or revised PDP is developed, the new PDP will be signed by the student, the issuing faculty, and the academic advisor, and progress towards completion will be monitored.
 - b. If the SSW faculty determines that a new or revised PDP will not likely help remediate the concerns raised, the student will be informed that they will be dismissed from the MSW Program and cannot enroll in social work courses, even as a non-degree seeking student.
8. The student will be informed of the decision to dismiss them from the MSW Program in writing. The writing will include notice of appeal rights and that they may petition for reinstatement into the program after 12 months. The policies and procedures for pursuing an appeal of such a decision are available here: <http://scra.nku.edu/policies/student-rights.html>

NOTICE: Faculty will initiate the Professional Performance Evaluation protocol at any time for students who engage in illegal or unethical activities or for students whose professional performance is deemed to present an immediate threat to the well-being of others. In such cases, and depending upon the nature of the concern, the Social Work Faculty may recommend dismissal from the MSW Program without the opportunity for student remediation.