

# MSW Field Education Course Manual

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The School of Social Work gratefully acknowledges the significant contribution made by Agency Field Instructors and placement agencies to social work education.



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<b>MSW Field Education Course Manual</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Field Personnel</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Welcome</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Non BSW Entry MSW – Two-Year Program</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Course Objectives</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Course Objectives – Practicum 1.....	6
MSW Field Course Objectives for both BSW entry (1 year) and Practicum 2 students.....	7
<b>Part 1: Placement</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Section 1</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Pre-Placement Processes and Role of Field Coordinators.....	8
Students Requiring Accommodation.....	9
Requests for Services.....	9
Field Submission.....	9
Hours and Schedules.....	10
<b>Section 2</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Selection and Confirmation of Placement.....	12
<b>Section 3</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Requirements Prior to Starting Placement.....	15
Immunization Policies and Other Documents.....	15
<b>Section 4</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Beginning the Placement.....	16
The Learning Contract.....	16
<b>Section 5</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Evaluation and Grading.....	21
<b>Section 6</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Role of Faculty Advisor and Agency Instructor.....	24
<b>Part 2: Seminars &amp; Workshops</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Integrative Seminars</b> .....	<b>28</b>
Distance Field Options.....	29
Campus Field Options.....	29
<b>Workshops</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Part 3: Difficult Situations</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Process for Dealing with Difficult Situations</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Part 4: Exceptional Placements</b> .....	<b>32</b>

**Section 1: Research-Based Placements ..... 32**  
**Section 2: Place of Employment Placements ..... 32**  
    Criteria ..... 33  
    Proposal ..... 33  
    Process for Review..... 34  
**Section 3: Social Work Private Placement Policy ..... 34**  
    Purpose ..... 34  
**Section 4: International Placements..... 36**  
**Section 5: Confidentiality and Insurance Issues ..... 37**  
    Confidentiality ..... 37  
    Insurance ..... 38  
**Conclusion ..... 40**  
**Appendices..... 41**

# Introduction

## Welcome

This manual is designed to provide students, agency instructors and faculty advisors with information and guidance to successfully prepare for and complete the Master of Social Work practicum courses. There are two entry paths to the MSW Degree: the BSW entry (one year program) and the non BSW entry (two-year program). The two-year MSW students must complete two 450-hour placements, one in each year of the program. The first placement is designed to provide a foundation for Social Work Practice to prepare students without a BSW to complete the advanced graduate level placement in year two. Please refer to the section specific to field placements for the two-year program.

The steps to secure a placement and the responsibilities of the Field Coordinators, Field Assistant, Agency Instructors, Students and Faculty Advisors are highlighted. The manual includes the information needed to prepare for field placement for both campus and distance students. Although the differences between campus and distance are minimal, they exist and are explained in detail (see Hours and Schedules, Selection and Confirmation of Placement) in this manual. All students must complete 450 hours in an approved, supervised setting and participate in the Integrated Seminar. The seminars are delivered in the classroom for campus students and on-line for distance. The Faculty Advisor facilitates these and generally oversees the placement once it begins.

The manual provides details on the coordination process from the beginning, with submission to placement completion, including evaluation and grading. The submission date is the beginning of the coordination process, April 15th for distance and September 15th for campus. We need that information to begin to work with you and the proposed agencies and organizations. Questions are welcome anytime however the coordinator does not begin working with students until after the submission due dates (see above). There are some differences between the two year and the one-year MSW placement objectives, and these will be presented and discussed.

A key feature of successful planning is good communication throughout the entire process, from submitting the proposal package to the final evaluation. Many different people can be involved, questions must be answered, and additional information is often needed in order for decisions to be made. Once the placement has begun good communication between the student, faculty advisor and agency instructor are vital. Therefore, it cannot be stressed enough the need to check your email and voicemail and stay in regular contact throughout the process. Good pre-planning enables the processes to go smoothly and students to achieve their learning goals and expectations.

## Non BSW Entry MSW – Two-Year Program

The Two-year MSW Program is designed to meet the needs of students who have earned a four-year undergraduate honors degree other than Social Work. The Field Placements and seminars are part of the required core courses for the MSW degree. Within the two-year MSW students complete two placements of a minimum of 450 hours each and both placements are completed between January and June, in year one and two, and each require attendance and participation in an integrated concurrent seminar. Please see sections in this manual for submission dates, requirements, and policies and procedures as they apply to both entry streams.

Students do not complete both placements in the same organization or with the same Agency Instructor. Requests to complete both in the same site will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. The overarching focus of the first placement is to accomplish a grounding in Social Work Practice at the generalist level. Therefore, the agency chosen for Practicum 1 must be able to provide the foundational practice skills and involve an MSW qualified social worker for supervision. Practicum 2 must involve an MSW practitioner as part of supervision and evaluation.

The profession of Social Work encompasses broad and diverse areas of practice, but all embody the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and Social Work theoretical perspectives. Field Education is where students can advance the integration of theory and practice and explore a wide variety of issues and areas of practice. Field coordination, in part, incorporates the student's previous experiences and education in establishing the placement sites and Learning Contracts.

The first semester is full time immersion in coursework, followed by a continuation of course work and the completion of the field placement in the second semester. In Practicum I, students are able to construct a professional identity, apply core social work values and standards in practice, and use critical self-reflection for personal and professional development. It focuses on Canadian social welfare policy, critical clinical social work practice, the values and beliefs of the profession, including a focus on diversity and anti-oppressive practice.

The following sections describe all the steps involved in order to secure, begin and complete a placement successfully. The role of the field coordinator is highlighted and the steps both distance and campus MSW students need to take are described.

## Course Objectives

Practicum 1 course objectives are intended to provide the foundational knowledge, values and skills for social work practice. Practicum 2 builds upon that foundation toward advanced social work practice.

### Course Objectives – Practicum 1

- To understand the social services and health sectors in a community; the mandate, philosophy, funding, organizational structure, services, and programs and utilize this information for generalist practice with individuals, families, groups, and communities.
- Practice in a manner that respects diversity, develop, and demonstrate an understanding of the significance of social identity and self-awareness for the Social Worker and client.
- Begin to develop and advance social work skills such as engagement, assessment, case management, intervention, mediation, advocacy, and activism.
- To begin to demonstrate a critical analysis of the relationships between power, societal structures, justice and equity and the role of the placement agency in service delivery.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professionalism and ethical practice through knowledge of Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice; initiate own learning and professional development.
- Develop the ability to practice social work in situations of conflict, showing good judgement, an openness to learn, an understanding of privilege, and the use of critical self -reflection.
- To understand and articulate the relationship between personal struggles and social, political, and economic processes and structures.
- Develop a Personal Framework for Practice which integrates theory, knowledge, values and skills and demonstrates appropriate critical social work interventions.

## MSW Field Course Objectives for both BSW entry (1 year) and Practicum 2 students

The following objectives are for both practicum 2 for non BSW entry and 1-year (BSW entry) MSW degree. It is recommended that the non BSW entry students think about how to plan for both placements in terms of having broad exposure and gaining the knowledge and skills to prepare for the placement in year 2. This includes self-reflection and an analysis of current knowledge and skill already attained.

- Demonstrate understanding of historical and contemporary equity and justice issues relevant to the placement agency.
- Articulate a range of ideological and epistemological perspectives relevant to the field of practice and service user population.
- Demonstrate analysis of the political, economic, organizational, legislative, social, and cultural contexts of the placement agency.
- Understand the contemporary social policy issues relevant to the placement agency.
- Demonstrate proficiency in Social Work skills consistent with anti-oppressive and critical Social Work that will enable students to work effectively in the placement setting.
- Understand the complexities and implications of social location/identity markers on the lives of service users of the placement agency.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply critical reflexivity in practice, evidenced by awareness and deconstruction of social location, assumptions and biases of the self, examination of strengths and challenges, and analysis of the implications of these for practice.
- Demonstrate the ability to prioritize, organize and manage work within agreed upon timeframes.

# Part 1: Placement

## Section 1

### Pre-Placement Processes and Role of Field Coordinators

The Field Coordinators manage all aspects of the BSW and MSW (campus and distance) field placements including the development and implementation of policies, procedures, and field options. The Coordinators negotiate placements by matching student learning needs with placement settings and learning opportunities in the context of the MSW course objectives.

In every case (both distance and campus) students are contacted to discuss their submission and request any revisions. All proposed agency staff are contacted to verify interest in the student, confirm the learning opportunities are available and supervision standards can be met.

Specifically, the Distance and Campus Field Coordinators or designate carry out the following:

1. Reviews all the field submissions (resumé, proposal and required forms) after the due date and notifies students of any revisions needed.
2. Evaluates individual learning needs in the context of prior student experiences, education, and the overall objectives of the field course.
3. Approves all placements (Place of Employment proposals reviewed and approved by both Coordinator and MSW Chair) after receiving and reviewing all submissions.
4. Ensure all Agency Instructors meet the criteria established by the school and the CASWE Standards of Accreditation by providing orientation and training.
5. Ensure confirmation materials (that include contact information for each person) are received by the Student, Agency Instructor and Faculty Advisor.
6. Negotiates Affiliation Agreements with sites locally and across Canada for distance delivery as every site must have these contracts in place in order to host a student.
7. Liaises with various Affiliate Placement Offices of Health Authorities to communicate site specific requirements to students and ensures compliance with these policies and procedures.
8. Resolves complex issues that occur in a placement that cannot be addressed through typical methods and consults with the Agency Instructor, Faculty Advisor and others as deemed appropriate in these matters.

9. Is a member of both BSW and MSW curriculum committees and brings forward all matters related to field education.
10. Oversees the annual Agency Fair and maintains other links with the Social Service Community and the Social Work Profession.
11. Provides support for research and project-based placements.
12. Conducts orientations for Faculty Advisors, Agency Instructors and Students, and provides general support and guidance for Advisors, Instructors and Students.

## Students Requiring Accommodation

The School of Social Work is committed to enable the participation of all students in the Field Education Course, we encourage students with (dis)abilities to consult the Dalhousie University Student Accommodation Policy. See <https://www.dal.ca/content/dam/www/about/leadership-and-governance/university-policies/student-accom-policy-rev-apr-2019.pdf>

## Requests for Services

It is the student's responsibility to make a request for accommodation in accordance with this policy. The request for accommodation must be made reasonably in advance of the event or process in relation to which accommodation is being sought so that a decision can be made. Except in rare circumstances when significant psychological or mental health issues arise, there should be no "after-the-fact" accommodation. See [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/academic-support/accessibility.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html)

## Field Submission

All Distance and Campus MSW students submit the following on the appropriate due date:

1. Up to date resumé.
2. Proposal that describes the agency and broad learning opportunities available to meet the learning needs and course objectives (see Course Objectives). Evidence of graduate level scholarship and writing skills is expected in the submission. The proposal is important for the Field Coordinator to match the students with appropriate sites and for perspective sites to determine if they want to accept the placement and whether it is a good fit with what they have to offer.
3. Student Information Form highlights contact information and areas of interest as well as specific sites (see Appendices).

- Page 2 of Student Acknowledgement Agreement (see Appendices). This is signed and included with the submission and when placement is confirmed the document is completed, witnessed by the school and sent to the agency and student.

## Hours and Schedules

### CAMPUS

Submission Due Date	September 15
Hours and Schedules	Required to complete and a concurrent integrated seminar class (see Seminars & Workshops for description and expectations of seminar)
Option to complete <b>full-time</b> (block) placement	Either January to March OR April to June
Option to complete <b>part-time</b> placement	January to June Students adjust their work schedules to have the appropriate number of hours in placement and attendance and participation in seminar.
<p>The Field Coordinator needs three possibilities as the availability of sites change each year and many Agency Instructors do not typically take students every year. Placements within the Health Authorities are more based on the availability of a MSW prepared Social Worker to provide the experience in the broad categories of Physical Medicine, Mental Health and Addictions. Campus students are not permitted to contact agencies directly, so it is important to communicate with the Field Coordinator throughout the process including responding to email and voicemail messages promptly.</p>	

### DISTANCE

Submission Due Date	April 15
Hours and Schedules	Required to complete and a concurrent integrated seminar class (see Seminars & Workshops for description and expectations of seminar)
Option to complete <b>full-time</b> (block) placement	Either September to December OR January to April
Option to complete <b>part-time</b> placement	September to April Students adjust their work schedules to have the appropriate number of hours in placement and seminar.
<p>It is also important for distance students to have more than one placement site. However, you are required to contact sites directly so it may not be necessary to contact three initially. The Field Coordinator requires detailed contact information included on the Student Form as they may be new</p>	

to the school, and we need to contact them to discuss your placement and possibly negotiate Affiliation Agreements. There have been occasions where the proposed site will not sign the Affiliation Agreement, or they have given preference to local universities.

All students preparing to complete their field course will be communicating with the Field Coordinator and Field Assistant throughout the process, beginning on the due date until after the placement has been confirmed. When the placement begins the communication is primarily with the Faculty Advisor and Agency Instructor.

## Section 2

### Selection and Confirmation of Placement

In all cases students need to have an interview to determine if the site is appropriate and the agency instructor and student are a good fit for each other. It also needs to be determined whether the site has the ability to meet learning needs in relation to the course objectives and area of practice interest. This is determined by review of the student submission, the result of the interview at the proposed agency and discussions with the field coordinator.

#### **Important differences between distance and campus delivery and field:**

This section is meant to clarify the specific differences between distance and campus field course. How both student groups prepare and plan for the field placement, what needs to be considered in the planning process, and how to communicate effectively with the school to achieve success are presented here.

The field placement for distance students is different from all the other courses taken online in that the student must be in an agency under the supervision of a qualified Agency Instructor. Typically studying by distance allows for time flexibility, readings and assignments can be completed after regular work hours. Field placements do not fit with the rest of the education experience of online learning and that must be accounted for in planning work and life commitments during completion of the field course.

The other main difference to make clear is the pre-placement planning that is required for distance versus campus students. Campus students are not permitted to contact agencies directly unless directed to by the coordinator. Both groups submit the same information, and the due dates are planned in such a way that there is ample time to identify and secure a placement. What is different is distance students are able to make the initial contact with perspective agencies of interest to gauge availability and collect the contact information for the Field Coordinator and Field Assistant. We need this because we may not know the agencies distance students are approaching if we have not had a student there previously. New agencies require Affiliation Agreement negotiations and other communication with the school.

Distance students can do some pre planning prior to the submission due date but the school must approve the placement only after reviewing the student submissions. Once the student's plan is approved, both distance and campus students must be interviewed prior to confirmation of the placement. Campus agencies are approached by the Field Coordinator and the student information is sent by the school. Distance students need to ensure their prospective agency receives required information. During this phase of the process all students need to communicate effectively with the school and provide any information requested in a timely way.

Lastly there are differences with competition that campus and distance students experience. Campus students are competing with a large group of fellow students in a defined geographic area in the same Social Service and Health Care Systems and often vying for the same sites.

While distance students do not have that concern, they must compete with other local universities and there can be restrictions in the number of placements as a result. Regardless of delivery mode the Field Coordinator, Field Assistant and distance education staff are available to provide accurate information, guidance and support.

## **CAMPUS**

**Campus students and local distance students must not contact** potential placement agencies or personnel unless directed to do so by the Field Coordinator. The Field Coordinator ensures the agency receives the student submission for review. This is due to a high volume of placements and the importance of maintaining a single point of contact to retain positive working relationships with agencies. Many larger organizations (NSHA, IWK, government departments) also follow specific processes in response to planning for student placements. Numerous requests are made from various educational institutions, both locally and nationally, so it is very important to respect their operational requirements.

Campus students await contact from the Field Coordinator regarding results of requests and whether there is possibility of a placement with the agencies identified on the Student Information Form. Be available to attend an interview to determine if it is a fit for both student and agency. Notify the Coordinator of the results of the meeting and await confirmation of the placement.

## **DISTANCE**

In direct contrast, distance students are required to make initial contact with potential field agencies, explore interests, opportunities and availability with agency personnel, and communicate with the Field Coordinator the relevant contact information (See Student Information in Appendices) and planning as it occurs. The distance student can send their information to the agency for review. Distance students know their community and much more about the Social Service and Health Care Systems in their geographic area so can best identify a suitable placement site. They are also not competing with the other students in their cohort. If a student is having difficulty finding a site, the Field Coordinator should be notified to discuss the situation.

It is important to remember placements must be approved and confirmed by the Field Coordinator after the due date of April 15. The placement is not confirmed **until it has been approved**. Distance students often think they must have the placement secured on that date. That is not possible until the school assesses the situation, all legal issues are dealt with, and proper supervision has been verified. That can only be done after the submission is received on the due date.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Identify & propose a field placement opportunity.	Field Coordinator reviews and clarifies and approves proposal or not.	Approach second placement choice if necessary.

## Section 3

### Requirements Prior to Starting Placement

In all cases students must participate in an interview before accepting a placement so there is a thorough understanding what the placement entails and whether the site will help achieve the learning goals of the student and the field course. Social Work placements are lengthy, and the work can be intense, so it is important to determine there is a good fit. The Field Coordinator always contacts the agency after the meeting occurs to discuss the situation and the placement is either confirmed or the second choice is explored.

### Immunization Policies and Other Documents

Many agency sites, government programs and services and all health care facilities have pre-placement protocols that must be followed and completed prior to beginning a placement. The agency will often explain what is required and most non-profit and government services require the standard Criminal Record Check (CRC) and Vulnerable Sector Search. These can be obtained from your local police station for a small fee. A Child Abuse Registry check is required for sites that have children as part of their client group. This can be obtained by the provincial government department that manages Child Welfare Services.

Health Care Facilities operated under Health Authorities have immunization requirements and database systems requiring various forms to be completed. The current system in Canada is called HSPnet through which some Authorities receive placement requests. There are certain procedures the school must complete on the student's behalf and others that the student must complete. The main point here is to communicate with the Field Coordinator and Field Assistant, so you know what the expectations are for the particular health authority you are involved with. The Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK immunization requirements are described in Appendix G: Faculty of Health Immunization Forms. We are also gathering the site-specific requirements for the other health authorities we work with on behalf of distance students and can assist students to navigate those systems.

Please note: for placements requiring the above, no approval to start will be given until all information is received that has been requested by the Authority and the school.

## Section 4

### Beginning the Placement

There are details that need to be worked out between the student and Agency Instructor once the placement has been confirmed. The actual start date and weekly schedule are sometimes determined at the point of the interview and, in other situations, after discussion with the school. In all cases the schedule and hours are documented on the Learning Contract Cover Page (see Appendices). This is completed in preparation for the first meeting with the Faculty Advisor and Agency Instructor to finalize the Learning Contract (see below for details).

While there is some flexibility in determining what schedule works for both the student and agency instructor the required number of hours must be met and **the schedule recorded on the Learning Contract cover page must add up to 450 hours on site. The placement must also be done concurrently with the Integrated Seminar. (Seminar hours count for 25 hours toward the 450 Hours.)** Also requests for workshops or other outside events (see Seminars & Workshops for further detail) to be counted as field hours must be approved and documented in the Learning Contract discussion and recorded on the cover page.

### The Learning Contract

The Learning Contract is the articulation of the student's learning while in the placement. Within this framework students must clearly present what (content) they want to learn in the placement and how (process) they will do it as well as how (means for evaluation) progress will be evident to the Agency Instructor and Faculty Advisor. It is the basis upon which the student's performance is evaluated and should be completed near the beginning of the placement. In a part-time placement this should be no later than week 4 and in a full-time block placement by the end of the second week.

The Learning Contract must:

- address what will be learned and how it will be facilitated
- reflect both the MSW Field (SWLK 6415 - 5004) objectives as outlined in the four components detailed below: Placement Context, Practice Content, Personal and Professional Development and Agency Expectations
- take into account the student's existing knowledge and skills
- identify the individual student's specific learning goals (i.e. what is to be learned in the field course)
- identify learning opportunities (i.e. how in the agency the learning goals will be met)
- identify means for evaluation (i.e. how the Agency Instructor will be able to assess progress in the goal areas)
- specify the time frame for the placement, the days and hours in the agency, time for regular supervision and evaluations, meetings with the Faculty Advisor, leaves or vacation times of student and/or Agency Instructor, and any other practical information deemed relevant (recorded on the Learning Contract Cover Page).

- Please note: Practicum 1 (5004) also includes the same assignment as the BSW placement which is a Framework for Practice Paper and presentation in their agency. Please refer to the BSW manual for description and consult your Faculty Advisor.

### **Process for Completing the Learning Contract**

During the field course, students are expected to develop and demonstrate the ability to integrate social work theory into practice as outlined in the following four components:

1. Placement Context
2. Practice Content
3. Personal and Professional Development
4. Agency Expectations.

The student, in consultation with the Agency Instructor(s), drafts the Learning Contract. The student must address the content under each of the above four components. The format for the Learning Contract is the student's choice (for example narrative form with listed goals, opportunities and means for evaluation or table format). Regardless of format, it must be based on the four components and be clear what the student wants to learn in the placement and how the learning will happen in those goal areas.

A draft of the Learning Contract should be provided to the Faculty Advisor and Agency Instructor/Preceptor for review and collaboration prior to the first meeting/teleconference. A meeting (campus) or teleconference (distance) is arranged with the student by the Faculty Advisor, with the student and the Agency Instructor to discuss and finalize the Contract.

### **Learning Contract Components**

The Learning Contract is an ongoing supervision tool as well as the basis for the mid-placement and final evaluations. It can be structured using the following four components (more applicable for 6415):

1. Placement Context
 

This relates to the broad social, political, economic and organizational contexts within which the field placement agency operates. In order to understand the broader context within which the agency/department operates, students should plan their learning around the following points:

  - Knowledge and analysis of relevant legislation, social, and organizational policies
  - Critical analysis of the underlying political ideologies of the agency's policies and practices
  - Analysis of specific individual concerns in the context of larger organizational and social responses
  - Critical assessment of the nature and characteristics of the placement agency's organizational culture, structure and political context and identification of relevant strategies for social and/or organizational change
  - Understanding of the service delivery system of which the placement agency is a part

## 2. Placement Content

This section should address goals for the placement related to knowledge and skills in the student's area of practice. Students are expected to define their learning goals in the following three areas:

- A. An understanding, sensitivity, and responsibility to issues and relationships of gender, sexual orientation, racialization, ethnicity, class, culture and different abilities. Learning goals could include:
  - Identifying and critically assessing how these issues are considered in the placement agency and specifically in the student's area of practice
  - Exploring the meaning and implications of being committed to critical/anti-oppressive social work practice
  
- B. The development of a substantive knowledge base, which provides a background for practice in the student's chosen area of specialization (for example, specific aspects of policy analysis, individual and family practice, research, community practice):
  - Include 3 to 5 specific analyses, skills or content areas the student is seeking to learn and integrate into the chosen area of practice and the means through which this learning is available in the placement
  
- C. An understanding of the nature and processes of change within the socio-political context of the agency and broader society. Define goals that address the strategies for change relevant to the work of the agency. These may include critical reflection on:
  - Processes for assessments for individuals, groups and /or communities within the societal context
  - Intervention plans based on the understanding gained through the assessment process
  - The role of client participation in selecting actions and interventions
  - How and from whom information is gathered
  - How 'closure'/termination of services is conceptualized in the context of individual, group and/or community social conditions
  - Evaluation with individuals, groups and/or communities regarding the various impacts (intended and unintended) of the interventions.

## 3. Personal and Professional Development

This section focuses on the integration of the previous sections within one's personal framework for social work practice. Students are expected to define their learning goals in each of the following areas:

- A. Self-Awareness and Engagement with Others: Becoming proficient in critically reflective analysis involves learning both from academic knowledge and through personal and professional experience to develop the skills of:
- standing back from one's own taken-for-granted assumptions, biases, beliefs and values in order to problematize practice situations
  - expanding one's understanding and options by framing practice situations from multiple perspectives, and
  - critiquing and reframing problems within broader socio-political and ethical perspectives
  - considering and taking action that is informed by this reframing

The student is expected to develop practice skills relevant to the effective and appropriate presentation of oneself in different practice situations. This can be facilitated by developing a critical self-awareness that facilitates positive relationships with diverse individuals, groups, communities, agencies and colleagues.

- B. Workload Organization and Instrumental Tasks: This section addresses the importance of being able to understand the nature and importance of functions associated with the work being done in the placement. The student is expected to organize the workload in order to complete relevant tasks in a focussed, independent and responsible way while facilitating communication and information sharing with others as appropriate. The student is expected to show initiative in carrying out assigned work and identifying areas that require further direction and supervision.
- C. Social Work Values and Ethics: All students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the values inherent in social work as they are reflected in the national and provincial social work codes of ethics and in social work theory and practice. All students must practice in keeping with the professional code of ethics. As well, each student must demonstrate advanced proficiency in the following areas:
- Identification of one's own and others' value constructs, assumptions, and beliefs and understanding their impact on social work practice
  - Understanding structurally embedded value differences or conflicts in, for example, social locations and ideas as they arise in professional practice with clients, colleagues, agencies and communities
  - Effective skills in ethical decision making
- D. Self-Evaluation: Students are expected to develop a process for critical evaluation of their own practice. Students must evaluate their practice in ways appropriate to the practice situation and seek and incorporate the observations and opinions of others in relation to the process and outcomes of interventions.

#### 4. Agency Expectations

This section focuses on what the Agency requires from the student and outline the expectations incumbent upon the student. Points of inclusion may be:

- Codes of conduct
- Confidentiality pledges or any other forms/agreements that need to be signed
- Attendance at meetings (team meetings, case conferences, rounds, etc.)
- Specific times in the agency (should address any need for flexibility)
- Meetings with community groups

## Section 5

### Evaluation and Grading

The student's analysis, reflection, and skills demonstrated in the agency and seminar are evaluated against the course objectives and the Learning Contract. This section provides the criteria for evaluating and grading the student's progress towards meeting the course objectives and the personalized learning goals approved in the Learning Contract. All evaluation forms are available to download and print out for completion at <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/health/socialwork/programs/field-education/msw-field-placements.html>

Evaluation and feedback should be an ongoing process throughout the placement. Both the Agency Instructor and the Faculty Advisor should be providing feedback to the student regularly.

There are two formal evaluations for SLWK 6415 and 5004. Each must be documented in writing on file with the Faculty Advisor; both take place during a meeting (campus) or teleconference (distance) between the Student, Agency Instructor and Faculty Advisor. If other workers in the placement agency have been involved in supervising the student, they should provide feedback in the meeting or give input on those areas of learning for which they are responsible according to the Learning Contract.

#### **The Mid-Placement Evaluation**

The mid-placement evaluation reviews the current experiences and opportunities in relation to the goals and objectives of the Learning Contract and participation in the integrative seminar. The student prepares a written summary reporting on highlights and challenges of the placement to date, revisions to the Learning Contract if applicable, and/or areas of learning requiring special attention. This document is signed by all three parties and given to the Faculty Advisor for placement on the student file. If needed, revisions and re-circulation of the Learning Contract for signature may occur. In the event there are concerns critical to the success of the placement, these must be raised at or before the mid-placement evaluation and documented in writing.

#### **The Final Evaluation**

The final evaluation uses the Learning Contract and the course objectives as templates for discussion. The Student, Faculty Advisor and Agency Instructor contribute to the final written evaluation. The final evaluation is read and signed by all three parties. The Faculty Advisor is responsible for conferring and entering the final grade to Dal Online and ensuring the signed evaluation document is received by the Field Assistant for filing.

**Framework for Practice Paper and Presentation – Practicum 1 only**

Students in Practicum 1 must also complete the final assignment of a Framework for Practice Paper and presentation. This assignment provides students with an opportunity to pull together the direct practice from the agency, seminar discussions, interprofessional learning and knowledge from other coursework. The paper should highlight the development of an explicit approach to Social Work Practice, which integrates personal ideology, theoretical grounding, practice strategies and professional ethics.

The paper is submitted to the Faculty Advisor and graded using the criteria below. An outline should be provided prior to the due date so the Faculty Advisor can provide feedback and guidance. Students present their paper to their agency, and this can be either formal or informal, includes the instructor and advisor and whoever else the student chooses to invite.

Criteria for evaluation and grading of the Framework Paper Assignment:

- Clear articulation and integration of ideologies, theories, practices and ethics
- Analysis of inter-professional dynamics
- Demonstration of the use of the framework in specific practice setting (ex, addictions, child welfare, corrections, policy analysis)
- Locating the framework in an understanding of systemic inequalities in resources and power within class, gender, race, sexual orientation and identity, ethnicity and (dis)ability and age.
- Demonstrate critical reflection including a discussion of strengths and areas for further development
- Evidence of critical thinking and analytical ability including any relevant literature

**Grading**

The MSW Field Course is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Students must obtain a pass in order to continue in the MSW Program. The student must pass both the agency placement and the integrative seminar component of the course.

The grade is awarded on the basis of the student's achievement of the course objectives demonstrated through the Integrative Seminar and achievement of the Learning Contract.

The final grade is assigned by the Faculty Advisor in consultation with the Agency Instructor(s) after the final evaluation meeting/teleconference. The Faculty Advisor submits the grade to the Dal Online system.

A failing grade may be awarded in the following circumstances:

- Where the student, in the course of the Field Placement and/or seminar, demonstrates personal unsuitability for the profession according to the Faculty of Health Professions' statement on

Professional Unsuitability (see Appendix H: Suspension or Dismissal from a Program on the Grounds of Professional Unsuitability).

- Where the student fails to meet, or to make what is judged to be sufficient progress toward, the learning goals agreed upon in the Learning Contract
- Where the student fails to reach, or make what is judged to be sufficient progress toward, the course objectives
- Where the student does not receive a pass for the Integrative Seminar
- Where a student leaves a placement without adhering to due process

In all instances when the Agency Instructor, Student or Faculty Advisor first begins to consider the possibility that a student may not be meeting the expectations of the course they should immediately follow the process outlined in Part 3: of this manual and contact the Field Coordinator.

### **Appeal Process**

If an MSW student receives a grade of fail for the field placement the appeal process is as follows:

- Student may write a letter to the MSW Committee requesting immediate reinstatement; the MSW Committee meets to review the circumstances and makes recommendation to the Director of the School.
- Student may re-apply to the School of Social Work 12 months later requesting reinstatement; MSW Committee meets to review the circumstances and makes recommendation to the Director of the School.
- Student may file an appeal regarding the process with the School of Social Work's Committee on Studies.

## Section 6

### Role of Faculty Advisor and Agency Instructor

#### **Agency Instructor Responsibilities**

1. Arranges and conducts an interview with the student to determine if the placement is a good fit for both agency staff and student. The site also needs to be able to meet the student's learning goals and the objectives of the MSW Field Course. Communicate the results back to the Field Coordinator and the student and arrange a start date.
2. Prepare for the student by providing a thorough orientation:
  - Ensuring that work space is available
  - Arranging for attendance at relevant meetings
  - Planning work assignments
  - Arranging for other staff to be involved with the student placement by job shadowing, co-facilitating groups or other joint activities with the student
  - Introducing the student to agency staff and clients (where applicable)
  - Making relevant legislation, policy and program manual available
  - Discussing the organizational structure of the agency, the services provided and the profile of the population served
  - Ensuring that the student is aware of the network of other agencies and services with which the field agency interacts on a regular basis
3. Facilitate interaction with other relevant professionals and services.
4. Oversee the completion of the Learning Contract (see The Learning Contract) in collaboration with the student and the Faculty Advisor. Assist the student in drafting learning goals and objectives. There will be a meeting (campus) or teleconference (distance) to discuss and finalize the Learning Contract with the Faculty Advisor and student.
5. Hold regular supervisory sessions with the student as specified in the Learning Contract. Be available as needed to offer consultation and support to the student.
6. Have primary responsibility for overseeing the student for the duration of the placement and arranging for another supervisor if absent either temporarily or permanently.
7. Follow the procedure outlined in this manual for [Dealing with](#) Difficult Situations.
8. Maintain ongoing liaison with the Faculty Advisor as needed.
9. Contribute to the final evaluation process.

### **Selection Criteria and Qualifications of MSW Agency Instructors**

Students in their first year are developing a foundation of social work practice and identity. The accreditation standards state the following: “Field instructors/supervisors at the BSW level or the foundation level (non BSW entry) normally hold at the minimum a BSW degree from an accredited program” (EPAS, 2021). All our faculty advisors hold, at a minimum an MSW and several years practice experience in a variety of fields.

- Normally hold, at a minimum, an MSW degree from an accredited social work program,
- Have two years of social work practice experience after graduation,
- Are interested in social work education, and
- Have support from the setting to permit adequate time for assuming field instruction responsibilities.

If the Agency Instructor does not have an MSW degree, there are two options:

1. A second Agency Instructor, who meets the above requirements, is secured. With this option there are two instructors who carry distinct responsibilities for supervision and evaluation of the student. The experienced, agency-based, non-social work prepared instructor is responsible for the orientation and day-to-day supervision and assignment of work. The non-agency based, MSW social worker is responsible for consulting with the student on a regular basis in person, by telephone and/or by email to ensure a social work perspective. These arrangements must be made prior to confirmation of the placement.
2. The School-assigned Faculty Advisor can play an enhanced role, taking on the responsibility to have additional contact with the student and facilitate discussion to deepen a social work practice perspective.

### **Selection Criteria of Agency Instructors for Non BSW entry Student placements**

The first-year placement (practicum 1) does not require the instructor to have an MSW. Students in their first year are developing a foundation of social work practice and identity. The accreditation standards state the following: "Field instructors/supervisors at the BSW level or the foundation level (non BSW entry) normally hold at the minimum a BSW degree from an accredited program” (EPAS, 2021).

All our faculty advisors hold, at a minimum an MSW and several years practice experience in a variety of fields.

**Please note:** A person currently undertaking MSW studies at Dalhousie University is not eligible to be the Agency Instructor for a Dalhousie BSW student.

## **Training and Support for Agency Instructors**

We are now able to offer all agency instructors/preceptors online training that consists of four main modules:

- Role of the Preceptor/Agency Instructor;
- Teaching and Learning Styles;
- Evaluation and Feedback;
- And Supporting Students' Learning Needs, as well as helpful related resources.

You will see a video listed in the Related Resources section of the training modules. It requires a password to access, and you will be prompted with directions to access it. We strongly encourage you to complete this training as it will support your role and enhance the student experience. You will find this resource at the following: <https://www.preceptor.ca>

## **Social Work Continuing Education Course Credit**

In recognition of the contribution of Agency Instructors, we offer a Social Work Continuing Education credit for each student supervised. Agency Instructors may use this credit for 50% off the registration fee of any Social Work Continuing Education workshop or certificate course.

Credits expire 1 year after the supervision session has ended. A current listing of Social Work Continuing Education courses may be found at [dal.ca/health/socialwork/coned](http://dal.ca/health/socialwork/coned). For more information or and/or a discount code, please contact [coned@dal.ca](mailto:coned@dal.ca).

## **Library Privileges**

We have a limited ability to have a staff person from an agency or hospital site have access to our online library system. Anyone interested in accessing this, please contact the Field Coordinator directly.

## **Faculty Advisor Responsibilities**

The Faculty Advisor oversees and monitors the process and content of student learning in the field placement, facilitates the integrative seminar and confers the final grade in consultation with the Agency Instructor. The Advisor maintains regular contact with both the Agency Instructor and student throughout the course of the placement.

The Faculty Advisor (FA) will:

1. Review the Student Acknowledgement Agreement and MSW Field Manual content during the first seminar and facilitate all seminars, online for distance students and in the classroom setting on campus.

2. Arrange three meetings with the student and the Agency Instructor during the placement:
  - At the beginning of the placement to finalize the Learning Contract (must be done during the first two weeks of block placement and by the end of the first month in a part-time placement). It is expected that the student circulates the Learning Contract to Agency and Faculty for feedback prior to this meeting.
  - At mid placement to review student's written mid placement summary and progress toward the learning goals, make necessary changes to the Learning Contract if required. Concerns related to successful completion of the practicum should be discussed at this time.
  - At the end of the placement to participate in the final evaluation meeting/ teleconference and assign a grade.
3. Comply with the process and documentation provided by the Field Assistant for tracking required paperwork.
4. Notify the Field Coordinator of problems/issues which may affect the outcome of the placement.
5. Submit all documentation (the Learning Contract, mid placement summary and the Final Evaluation) to the Field Assistant at the end of term
6. Provide guidance and support throughout the placement and ensure any concerns are dealt with and communicated to the Field Coordinator.
7. Coordinate tasks associated with the completion of the Final Student Evaluation, including:
  - Receive the evaluation completed by the student and Agency Instructor and complete the FA portion, submit the signed copy to the Field Assistant.
  - Confer the final grade and enter the grade into the Dal Online system.
  - Ensure that all final evaluation documentation is received by the Field Assistant.

# Part 2: Seminars & Workshops

## Integrative Seminars

Facilitation and evaluation of the seminar is provided by the Faculty Advisor and topics are student driven in the context of the course objectives. The Faculty Advisor recognizes the established professional capabilities of the participants and the seminars serve various functions. They are intended to provide an opportunity for group discussion of issues encountered by students in the field. They provide a place where theory and knowledge gained through the curriculum can be further analyzed and integrated within a practice framework. They also encourage students to reflect upon past practice experiences as further touchstones of relevance to present experiences.

An important aspect of the seminar experience is the knowledge construction among students as they share their insights and dilemmas with each other. It is a critical source of dialogue and challenge. The shared perspectives foster a spirit of focused engagement with the issues, roles and experiences within the agency. The ensuing support is an essential component of the larger reflective experience of the graduate program. Participation in discussion is an expectation of each student and a central contributor to the overall evaluation of the placement.

Students must participate in the Integrative Seminar concurrently with their field placement. The seminars are accessed through the Brightspace Learning System for the distance program and on site in a classroom for the on-campus program. The field course is considered complete when you have done both 450 hours in your field agency and the seminar requirements.

Participation in the seminars does count toward the 450 hours required for the course. 425 hours must be completed in the agency selected for your field placement, and 25 hours completed in seminar. The field course is considered complete when you have done both 450 hours in your field agency and the seminar requirements.

It is important to note that the integrated seminar continues over two semesters. Students are required to participate in the seminar bi-weekly for both semesters regardless of whether they are in a block placement or a part-time placement. For the distance program the seminar is September to April, and for the on-campus program the seminar is January to June.

### Distance Field Options

Part-time Placement: 450 hours	
September	→ April

OR

Full-time Block: 450 hours	OR	Full-time Block: 450 hours
September → December		January → April

AND

Bi-weekly Seminar Online: All	
September	→ April

### Campus Field Options

Part-time Placement: 450 hours	
January	→ June

OR

Full-time Block: 450 hours	OR	Full-time Block: 450 hours
January → April		April → June

AND

Bi-weekly Seminar Online: All	
January	→ June

## Workshops

With the approval of the Agency Instructor and Faculty Advisor, workshops which enhance learning related to the work they are doing in their field site can be counted as part of the required hours. They must occur during the same time as completion of field placement. These requests can be submitted to the Faculty Advisor by email and must include a description of the workshop, the number of hours and how it relates to the field course. Students may be approved up to 20hrs of workshops outside of their placement by their Faculty Field Advisor.

# Part 3: Difficult Situations

## Process for Dealing with Difficult Situations

If problems arise **before** the placement is confirmed, the Field Coordinator, Student and the agency contact will pursue a resolution or approach another agency. If problems arise at any time during the placement, the Faculty Advisor should be contacted immediately by either the Student or the Agency Instructor. If the Faculty Advisor, Agency Instructor or Student becomes concerned or dissatisfied with any aspect of the placement and it cannot be resolved during regular supervisory sessions, it is expected that the person with the concern will immediately call a teleconference/meeting with the other two parties to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

If a resolution satisfactory to all parties is not achieved, the Field Coordinator must become involved and attempt to find a resolution together with the Student, Agency Instructor and Faculty Advisor. The Director of the agency will be informed of the situation if deemed necessary and appropriate. The Field Coordinator will inform the Associate Director of the School and the Chair of the MSW Committee and initiate appropriate action based on the particular situation.

Possible outcomes of discussions include:

- alterations to the Learning Contract
- a change in Agency Instructor or Faculty Advisor
- termination of the placement and change of placement site or deferral
- failure of the course

The Faculty Advisor, the Agency Instructor and the Student can make minor alterations to the Learning Contract if all three parties agree. A change in the Agency Instructor or Faculty Advisor, or change in placement, requires the involvement of the Field Coordinator. The SSW Associate Director, the MSW Committee Chair and the Director of the field placement agency will be notified and involved to the extent deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis. If a placement has been terminated because of the actions of the student, the hours completed normally will not count and the course must be repeated. In other situations, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

It is expected that the School and the Placement Agency will follow these procedures if circumstances warrant any or all of these actions. If a student leaves a placement without following the processes outlined above it may result in the student failing the course.

Dalhousie University students, staff and faculty are protected under the University's Sexualized Violence Policy. Please see Appendix I: Dalhousie University Sexualized Violence Policy for a copy of that policy.

# Part 4: Exceptional Placements

## Section 1: Research-Based Placements

Students seeking to complete a research-based placement are advised to consult with the Field Coordinator prior to the submission due date. All proposals for research-based placements are reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator and Field Coordinator. Independent, student-led research requires ethical approval for research with human subjects and is not feasible within the timeline of the MSW Field Course. Thus, the option for a research-based placement is for the student to be involved as a learner in an established research project, wherein the research project has ethical approvals secured from the sponsoring institution. In this case the student must provide written documentation confirming that an ethical review has been completed and that the project has been approved. The MSW Committee considers the MSW Field Education course as an opportunity for learning experiences and the integration of analysis and practice skills beyond the institution of the School of Social Work. For this reason, field placements undertaken with full-time faculty members within the School of Social Work are not encouraged.

## Section 2: Place of Employment Placements

The MSW Committee strongly advises that MSW students complete the agency component of the MSW Field Education Course in a setting outside that of their regular employment. This policy is based on the principle that the graduate level field placement must engage new learning that augments the existing knowledge and practice base. The field placement should provide an opportunity for the student to enhance her/his existing critique, social work knowledge and practice skills in new dimensions beyond the current field of employment.

Further it is essential to recognize the relationship that employees have with their employer is fundamentally different than a student/Instructor relationship and this inhibits learning regardless of whether the placement fits our criteria.

The student must be able to challenge agency policies and procedures and discuss alternative interventions and approaches to dealing with social work problems and issues. Additionally, the Agency Instructor must be in a position to objectively evaluate the student's performance. Therefore, the Agency Instructor must be someone different than the student's regular supervisor/manager.

Finally, the work performed during the placement must qualify as graduate level learning and this is considered in assessing place of employment placements by reviewing the relevant job descriptions. The position requirements would need to be at a graduate level in terms of hiring.

The School recognizes that in some exceptional situations the above noted conditions can be met in the student's place of employment. The MSW Program Committee will consider requests from students

to do their placement in their current site of employment. All requests to complete a field placement in the student's place of employment must be approved by the Field Coordinator, in consultation with the Chair of the MSW Program. The proposal and supporting documentation must meet **all** of the following criteria:

### Criteria

- There must be an opportunity for new learning regarding knowledge, skills and analysis that is well documented and meets the objectives of SLWK 6415.
- The placement must be supported by a letter from the employer accepting the proposed placement as an academic endeavor and verifying new learning at the graduate level.
- A new position does not necessarily qualify. If a new position is being considered for a placement:
  - The date of appointment and the beginning of the field placement must coincide.
  - The current and new job descriptions must be made available to the coordinator and documentation from the employer must detail the new learning in the new position. This is an important issue because people are generally hired in positions because they meet the qualifications and are able to perform the duties; therefore this is not new learning.
- The learning opportunities available at the prospective agency must coincide with the course objectives for MSW Field Education (see Course Objectives).
- The Agency Instructor cannot be the same person who supervises the student in paid employment or someone over whom the student normally has authority. The supervisor must be in a position to objectively evaluate the student's performance in the placement. The Agency Instructor must meet the qualifications set out in this manual and be approved by the Field Coordinator.

### Proposal

The proposal to do a placement in one's place of employment must be included in the full student submission (see Field Submission). In addition, the submission must include the following:

- A current resumé identifying undergraduate field placements
- The current job description
- The proposed learning opportunities and learning activities in the placement and anticipated new knowledge, skills and analysis to be acquired
- The new job description, if the proposed placement is an entirely new position

- Clear articulation as to why the learning opportunities are only available in this setting (must go beyond financial considerations)
- Letter from the employer, which must:
  - name the Agency Instructor and clarify that this person does not normally supervise the student.
  - verify that time will be made available for the student to participate in meetings, workshops, seminars and other activities which would enhance the learning experience. It must be verified that sufficient time be set aside for regular supervisory sessions with the Agency Instructor.
  - verify that placement being proposed can meet the goals of SLWK 6415 and can provide opportunities for new learning in knowledge, skills and analysis.
  - clarify that the placement being proposed is new learning and the student will not be doing the same work that s/he has undertaken in the past.

### Process for Review

- Only complete proposals will be reviewed, and the proposal, resumé and Student Information form must be received on the due date. Supporting documentation can be submitted later (i.e. letter from employer may take time to get)
- The Field Coordinator, in consultation with the Chair of the MSW Program, will review complete request for placement in the student's current place of employment
- The decision will be communicated to the student in writing

## Section 3: Social Work Private Placement Policy

### Purpose

The policy outlines the guidelines and expectations for requests of placements within private practices including understanding the context of the practice setting, social work students' expectations/learning needs and the roles of the Field Education Coordinator, Agency Supervisor and Faculty Advisor.

These settings can provide meaningful and relevant learning but also present some challenges. A placement in a private practice must provide quality educational experiences aligned with social work values, ethical standards, and educational requirements and the MSW field course objectives. The objective of this policy is to ensure that MSW placements in private practice settings reflect the integrity of the profession while fostering meaningful educational experiences that align with the field course.

## 1. Eligibility for Placement

- Placements in private practice are normally only approved for Master of Social Work (MSW) students.

Students must have completed the required pre-corequisites in social work theory, practice, ethics, and have significant previous practice experience at the BSW level.

- Approval by the students' Field Education Coordinator is required.

## 2. Practice Setting Requirements

The private practice site must:

- Be legally established and compliant with provincial licensing regulations.
- Offer services aligned with the social work profession.
- Provide a structured and supportive environment conducive to learning.
- Maintain adequate liability insurance for professional services and agree to all terms and conditions of the Affiliation Agreement with Dalhousie University.

## 3. Supervision Requirements

- The site must designate a qualified and licensed social worker to serve as the student's primary field supervisor. In cases where a social worker is not present, but the site can provide relevant learning opportunities, the school will provide secondary social work supervision.
- Supervision meetings must be consistently provided and documented through the Learning Contract.

## 4. Learning Opportunities

Placements need to provide students with the opportunity to:

- Engage with clients, which could include intake assessments, counselling sessions, and case management.
- Apply theoretical knowledge to practice and develop advanced practice skills and knowledge.
- Participate in professional development activities such as meetings, training, and community engagement initiatives where available.
- Develop and demonstrate skills in documentation, ethical decision-making, and culturally responsive practice.

## 5. Ethical and Legal Considerations

Students must adhere to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics and professional standards.

- Clients must be informed of the student's role, including supervision requirements.
- Confidentiality and informed consent protocols must be in place and followed.

- Students must maintain clear professional boundaries and adhere to all legal regulations governing social work practice.
- As private practices are a fee-for-service structure, arrangements regarding payments for services that students provide are at the discretion and sole responsibility of the agency. It is recommended that the student inform the school of any remuneration involved in the practicum.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Field Education Coordinator:** Reviews students field submission and request for private practice placement and provides approval or makes other recommendations where appropriate. The coordinator ensures all requirements are in place before placements are confirmed.
- **Student:** Actively engage in learning, complete assigned tasks, maintain ethical practice, and participate in supervision.
- **Supervisor:** Provide supervision, facilitate learning and regular feedback, and evaluate student performance.
- **Faculty Advisor:** Monitor placement quality, support students and supervisors, facilitate the integrated seminar and intervene if issues arise.

## Section 4: International Placements

The MSW Program is able to offer international field placements in exceptional circumstances only, and only when the following criteria are met:

- When the student has substantial experience in the social work field prior to beginning the MSW
- With agencies with which an International Affiliation Agreement is already in place
- In a full-time block after all other courses for the MSW are completed
- When the student has met with personnel at International Student Exchange Services regarding international travel as a student

Students are required to submit the following package a minimum of 8 months prior to potential departure:

- Student Information Form
- Student Proposal, addressing:
  - Why an international placement is relevant to the learning needs of the student

- How the learning opportunities are specific to the international site
- How the international placement will expand preparation for social work practice
- Rationale for how/why a local placement cannot meet the student's learning needs
- Statement regarding the student's ability to live and cope while undertaking an international placement, including what they need to prepare for Statement on how they will fund themselves
- Résumé
- One letter of reference from an outside source who can comment on suitability for a professional international learning experience (for example past or current supervisor in volunteer or paid work; past or current professor)

Student submission packages are reviewed by the Field Coordinator and Graduate Program Coordinator for approval. Individual meetings may also be required. The student will be notified of the decision in writing.

Due to the volume of placements arranged locally during any one term, if a student cancels the request for an international placement within 4 months of the date of intended travel, there is no guarantee that the School can secure a local field placement for the upcoming term.

Students are required to participate in a field seminar equivalent, a central component of the field course. Where the technology exists, students can do this online; where technology does not exist, alternate arrangements will be made. Each student is assigned a Faculty Advisor. During the placement the student keeps a journal and is required to communicate with the Faculty Advisor on a regular basis to discuss issues related to the placement experience. Please note: International placements are only offered in the one year MSW or the second year of the two year program. Applications are due September 15 for an April start date.

## Section 5: Confidentiality and Insurance Issues

### Confidentiality

In accordance with the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, SSW students, faculty and staff will protect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all professionally acquired information concerning them. The student will follow the field agency's policies and procedures regarding confidentiality insofar as they do not contravene the professional code of ethics. Students must have a signed, witnessed copy of the Student Acknowledgement Agreement (see Appendices) on file prior to their start date.

Where client information is used in supervision, seminars or courses, the student will follow the policies and procedures of the individual field agency. The student must discuss the particular situation with the

Agency Instructor and approval must be given. Names and other identifying information will not be used. In the case of written material, names and other identifying data will be removed and where video or audiotapes are used, written permission must be obtained from the client specifying the way in which the video or audiotapes will be used and for what purpose. Students must always consult the Agency Instructor or Faculty Advisor when in doubt to ensure confidentiality is protected at all times. A Dalhousie policy has been created which guides students' use of all electronic devices and social media while in placement. It is important to follow these policies at all times as they relate to confidentiality of client and agency information. This policy is included in Appendix J: Guidelines for Student Use of Social Media & Electronic Communication in Practice Education Settings of this manual for students, agency staff and faculty advisors to review.

## Insurance

When students go out on placement they are interacting with the site's clients, patients and families along with the regular staff. Students and all organizations they are placed with must have sufficient insurance to cover liability on behalf of the individual student, the university and the organization. This is done through Affiliation Agreements that must be signed by both parties (organization head and university). Depending on which province you live there are also issues of Workers Compensation Coverage (legislation referring to student fieldwork is different in each province). These issues are dealt with by the Field Coordinator and the proposed sites. Below is an excerpt of Dalhousie's Affiliation Agreement:

*Dalhousie University agrees to indemnify and save harmless the field agency from any or all claims, suits, actions for loss or damage caused by:*

- a. a student in the course of their social work training pursuant hereto, or*
- b. faculty or staff from the School of Social Work in the course of their employment pursuant hereto.*

*Dalhousie University agrees to maintain adequate liability insurance to cover any loss, damage or injury of any nature whatsoever caused by the acts of its employees in the course of their employment or the acts of students in the course of their studies at the School of Social Work or at their field placement location.*

*The Facility agrees to indemnify and save harmless Dalhousie University from all loss, cost, expense, judgment or damage on account of injury or damage to persons or property, including death, in any way caused by the negligence or willful act of the Facility, its servants, agents or employees related to or arising from the programs or other matters to which this Agreement pertains, together with all legal costs and expenses incurred by Dalhousie University in defending any legal action pertaining to the above.*

If an agency does not carry sufficient liability insurance the amount of coverage can be negotiated, or an agreement may not be accepted. The student is also required to sign the Student Acknowledgement Agreement (see Appendices). This must be signed, witnessed and be received by the school's Field Assistant prior to starting any fieldwork. (Also mentioned above in reference to confidentiality).

### **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

In several provinces, students on clinical placements are covered by provincial workers' compensation legislation. This means that if the student becomes disabled while they are on a clinical/fieldwork placement and are permanently prevented from working in the area that they are training for, the workers' compensation scheme will provide them with compensation calculated based on an assessment of how much they would have otherwise made in the profession.

### **Disability Insurance**

Dalhousie has occupational accident coverage for all students in all faculties that participate in unpaid placements, except placements in those provinces that have mandatory workers compensation coverage. If a student is injured while participating in an unpaid placement, the student should follow the normal placement site protocol but also contact pepadm@dal.ca at the earliest opportunity so the injury can be documented following Dal Safety Office procedures. Students still need to maintain their DSU Health Insurance or equivalent private health plan coverage, as the disability insurance does not include health insurance. Please note: The occupational disability insurance coverage does not apply to international placements.

### **Health/Travel Insurance**

The university advises that students obtain travel health and accident insurance if completing a rotation outside of the province of their provincial health card

### **Students Travelling in Vehicles**

Students or preceptors who use their own vehicle while travelling to or from a clinical education activity need to maintain their own automobile insurance. All students and preceptors should notify their broker/insurer to make sure they have adequate coverage. Dalhousie University recommends that anyone using their own vehicle for university business/study carry a minimum liability of \$2 million on their automobile policy. It should be noted that occupational disability insurance would not apply if a student were injured while commuting to or from clinical placement. The occupational disability insurance would only apply in a motor vehicle accident where the student was travelling as part of their clinical placement experience.

# Conclusion

This manual has been designed to provide detailed information and guidance to prepare for and successfully complete the MSW field course (SWLK 6415 and 5004).

Our priority is to facilitate the successful planning of your field placement, and it is important to stress that staff and faculty are available to help clarify processes and answer questions not covered sufficiently in this document or on our web site. All students in our school community are contacted during the field coordination process. We make explicit efforts to ensure distance students are well supported throughout the process and have included detail in this manual about the distinct differences (which are minimal) with respect to distance versus campus delivery mode and the preparation and completion of field.

It is a very rewarding experience for us to be able to work with our students, the agencies and organizations in our local communities, across Canada and beyond. The Dalhousie University School of Social Work has a well-developed network of organizations that consistently offer placements to our MSW students. We work very collaboratively with health, social services, other government departments and agencies on a wide variety of placements and encourage innovative and unique placement experiences where appropriate and possible. We maintain a robust database of these contacts both locally and across the country that sustain field education, and we are extremely thankful for the continued collaboration and support.

At the national level field education is becoming a stronger entity as the field coordinators/directors meet twice a year to share information and ideas, frequent changes, challenges and successes. Students consistently report that their experience in field is one of the highlights of their social work education. Together we aim to improve the student and agency experience with practice education, ultimately strengthening all of the components to provide excellence in our field courses. We encourage dialogue and feedback on how we are doing things well and what we can improve on. Both students and agency instructors/preceptors can fill out the forms located at:

<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/health/socialwork/programs/field-education/msw-field-placements.html>

Finally, we hope that our MSW students will consider giving back to the profession by becoming an agency instructor/preceptor for someone who is seeking a placement once our graduates become established social work practitioners. This really forms the basis of the solid, sustainable fieldwork offerings. We continue to be delighted to sustain and build, locally, nationally and beyond, interesting and challenging graduate level placements

# Appendices

[Appendix A: MSW Field Placement Forms](#)

[Appendix B: Student Information Form – Campus](#)

[Appendix C: Student Information Form – Distance](#)

[Appendix D: Student Acknowledgement Agreement](#)

[Appendix E: Learning Contract Cover Page – Campus](#)

[Appendix F: Learning Contract Cover Page – Distance](#)

[Appendix G: Faculty of Health Immunization Forms](#)

[Appendix H: Suspension or Dismissal from a Program on the Grounds of Professional Unsuitability](#)

[Appendix I: Dalhousie University Sexualized Violence Policy](#)

[Appendix J: Guidelines for Student Use of Social Media & Electronic Communication in Practice Education Settings](#)